

REVELATION *Examined*
with CANDOUR.

OR, A FAIR
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
SENSE *and* USE
Of the Several
REVELATIONS

Expresly Declared, or sufficiently Implied,
To be given to Mankind from the CREATION,
as they are found in the BIBLE.

By a profess'd Friend to an honest Freedom of
Thought in Religious Enquiries.

VOL. II.

Containing Dissertations upon the following Subjects; viz.

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|--|---|
| I. Of the Grant of Animal Food
made to <i>Noah</i> , after the Flood. | IV. Of Circumcision. |
| II. Of the Building of <i>Babel</i> . | V. Of the Destruction of <i>Sodom</i>
and <i>Gomorrhah</i> . |
| III. Of the Predictions relating
to <i>Ishmael</i> . | VI. Of the Command given to
<i>Abraham</i> to sacrifice his Son. |
-

*To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear?
Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken:
behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach: they
have no delight in it, Jer. vi. 10.*

The THIRD EDITION.

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WITH CANON

OR A
ENQUIRY

INTO THE
SENSE
OF THE
REVELATIONS

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Printed by
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To the Right Honourable

PETER, Lord *KING*,

BARON of OCKHAM,

Lord High Chancellor of

GREAT-BRITAIN.

MY LORD,



*If any other motive, than
those which have governed
and ennobled your life, the
love of truth, and the love
of justice, could have influenced me in
the business of a dedication, your
Lordship had been saved this trouble*

A 2

but

iv DEDICATION.

but as I know no great name, to which a work of this kind could be more properly inscribed, my choice was soon determined. Religion vindicated from abuse, by the aids of reason and learning, naturally appeals to the great patrons and proficients in both; and it is but justice to say, That the Lord Chancellor of GREAT-BRITAIN, was, in that view, easily distinguished.

MY LORD, if I were capable of doing you honour by a dedication, yet would you be as little obliged to me, on that account, as you are to any thing but the providence of God, and your own worth, for all the honours to which you ever attained. You rose irresistably to them, by the force of a superior merit; nor were they so properly conferred upon you, as
claimed

DEDICATION. v

claimed for you ; claimed by the voice of the publick ! In this case (if it ever was in any) the voice of truth, and the voice of God.

YOUR beginning, my Lord, was the greatest that true glory could wish. Your Foundation was laid, in humility, and religion. Your knowledge in the law of God, was the best foundation of your distinguished knowledge in the laws of your country. The foundation was laid deep, and built upon a rock, and the superstructure rose with proportioned strength and dignity. Your skill was unrivalled, and your integrity untainted.

THAT superior skill in the laws of your country, which is wont (even in less perfection) to fill up the minds of many of its professors, and leave little

vi DEDICATION.

room for knowledge of other kinds : was, in you, but a better preparation to shine to more advantage in the senate, as your great integrity made you highly, revered there, and removed you thence, to preside in one of the courts of justice.

YOUR abilities upon the bench, called you, upon the first occasion, (the most glorious for you that could be imagined) to the first honour in your profession; and placed you, unenvyed, among the peers of GREAT-BRITAIN, where your native humility still attends you, and is the greatest ornament of your exaltation.

*MY LORD, these circumstances, glaring, and glorious, in the eyes of the whole world, left me little merit or choice in this application. My
Lord,*

DEDICATION. vii

Lord, this application, infers no more, than that I honour you in common with the rest of mankind; but give me leave to say, that I honour you also, for reasons, which do not equally affect them all. I honour you, from the regard you bear to true religion. I honour you, because you are a good christian, in consequence of being an excellent scholar, and a good man. Not because it is the religion of your country (the present fashionable phrase) but because it is the religion of the living God, the God of truth!

IT is true, you received the christian religion from education: but you embraced it from choice: you embraced it, my Lord, after a thorough enquiry into its truth and excellence; you embraced it, because you found nothing in your own soul to contradict, nor any

viii DEDICATION.

thing in the whole compass of reason and learning, that did not tend to confirm it.

IT might well become Pythagoras, and his commentator, to reverence the religion of their country, because it was by law established; inasmuch as that was the only reason, any man of sense could assign, for his attachment to it. But you will own, my Lord, that this only reason ill becomes the mouth of the meanest christian, of common sense, for asserting the religion of Jesus. To defend the best religion that ever was instituted, a religion every way worthy the wisdom and the goodness of God, from the only reason, by which the vilest, the worst, and the most unworthy of God, could be defended; Is this to be endured!

IT

DEDICATION. ix

IT might well become the heathen world, to distinguish, between the religion of the wise, and the religion of the vulgar: inasmuch as the religion of the vulgar, with them, was every way unwise, absurd, and abominable! tho', in truth, it must be owned, that what they called the religion of the wise, was not in any degree less so; they differed indeed from the vulgar, but it was, for the most part, only in variety and refinement of absurdity. They did not believe, with the vulgar, that the gods were subject to human vices and infirmities, but then they believed, what was, at least, full as absurd, that they were utterly negligent of human affairs.

HOWEVER, as the religion of the vulgar, was absurd, they were in some
sort

X DEDICATION.

sort justified in despising it ; but is the religion of Jesus therefore absurd, because the religion of Bacchus and Venus was so ? Is not that the very religion which the wise men of our world now embrace ? Was it absurd in the vulgar, two thousand years ago, and is it now rational in the wise ? What made it then more absurd, than the absurd practices to which it led ? And will the same practices now make it wise ? What is it that demonstrates any religion wise, but the wisdom and excellence of its ends, and the suitableness of its instituted means, for the attainment of those ends ? And will the wise men of the world pretend to find nobler ends, or better means, than those exhibited to us in the Christian institution ! Insupportable excess of folly, thus to insult the common sense of mankind, under the vaunt of wisdom.

MY

D E D I C A T I O N. xi

MY LORD, *I object to no man the reverence he bears to the religion of his country: the grievance is, that any man of common sense, should mention this, as the only reason for reverencing the religion of Christ.*

THIS reason, my Lord, might well become a heathen philosopher; inasmuch as many of them professed to know no other distinction between good and evil, but the determination of the law; but surely it must ill become us, who are perfect in these distinctions; in an age too, where reason shines so bright, as to be a sufficient guide, (if we may believe the most celebrated writers amongst us) to the meanest savage in Afric, or America, and shall it be said, that we have reason to every other purpose

xii DEDICATION.

pose, but to discern the excellence of the gospel?

BUT, my Lord, is this the truth? Is it that we cannot discern the excellence of the gospel, or cannot bear its imperfections? Quite otherwise, my Lord! it is its purity, and perfection, that impeach it. It reproaches our lives, and upbraids our consciences. It is inconsistent with avarice, ambition, and sensual indulgence! either this, or gross indiscriminating ignorance, is the only cause to which it can be ascribed. The Precepts of Jesus Christ, are incompatible with the crying corruptions of the age! The rules are too strait, for the crooked paths we tread in; they upbraid our evil ways, and perverted manners; and therefore we refuse to be guided by them. These are the true grounds of our dislike

DEDICATION. xiii

like to the religion of Jesus, and whilst they are so, it is no wonder, if its being the religion of our country, should be the only reason of our regard for it.

HAPPY are you, my Lord, in whom, neither this way of thinking, nor any of the temptations to it, can take place. Happy are you, who are blessed with a head, and a heart, too clear, and too incorrupt, to be swayed by such maxims! Happy for you, that early learning hath so enlarged your mind, and right habits possessed it, as to make your religion, the business of your reason; and your duty, your delight!

IN one word, my Lord, happy are you, that the Providence of God, placed you, out of the reach of early temptation, from the vanities of life;
and

xiv DEDICATION.

and the more, inasmuch as the same circumstances which were of advantage to your vertue, have greatly added to your honour.

MY LORD, *it is your greatest glory to have some resemblance to the gospel of Christ; you rose in the world, as that prevailed in it, without mortal aids and advantages; or, to speak more properly, in opposition to them all; by the force of innate worth! Self-raised, self-recommended! and, what is perhaps yet rarer, the worth that raised you, still continues with you. As outward honour could add nothing to it, pride could not impair it.*

GOD *that raised you high, preserve you long; preserve you a blessing, and an ornament to your country; and continue your vertues, with increase of glory,*

DEDICATION. xv

glory, in your posterity. Believe me, my Lord, no mortal more sincerely or disinterestedly wishes this, than the author of this letter ; who contents himself with the honour of reverencing your worth and vertue in secret, without the addition of that honour, which would accrue to him, from being known to the whole world under the character of,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

Most Humble and

Most Obedient Servant.

DEDICATION

With a view to the benefit of the
young and the ignorant, I have
been induced to publish this
little volume, which I hope
will be useful to many
of our countrymen, and
to the whole world.

YOUR LOYALTY

Most Humble and

Most Obedient Servant



THE
PREFACE.



ANT of taste, is a complaint, which none but good writers are privileged to urge against the age they live in : and consequently, such as no modest man will avow in his own behalf. But when that complaint is allowed by men of genius, to be just, as it is at present, others may, perhaps, be allowed to take it up ; at least, to enquire into the causes of it.

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AND

AND without question, the immediate cause of the ill taste which prevails among us, is, the present general disregard of *Roman* and *Grecian* literature : together with that strange astonishing contempt, into which, the scriptures, (the noblest of all writings this world was ever blessed with) have fallen for some years past.

THAT this is, in a great measure, owing to the growth of infidelity, is undeniable ; but that other causes also have concurred, nay, greatly contributed to this evil, must, I think, be owned.

MATHEMATICAL learning hath, of late years, been greatly and justly in esteem among us ; and some men have raised themselves into reputation,

tion, this way, who will always be an honour to their age and country. But the misfortune is, that some of these very unhappily mistook their talents: and carried that cold, dry, didactick way, into the pulpit, which could only become, or be of use in, the schools. Nay more, what might have been of excellent use in the schools, became of very evil influence in the church; inasmuch as religion, was now considered, barely in the light of truth; and so was discussed, like other truths, with a dry, cold unconcern, which neither interested, nor influenced, any one mortal, in its behalf.

'Tis true, texts were collated, difficulties cleared, and points proved; but the heart was all this time unmoved, and the conscience unalarmed! the preacher acted, as if

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he had to do not with corrupt, unruly mortals, but with pure, unbodied intelligences: among whom the perception of truth was the only felicity to be attained, or duty practised. The audience became apparently very knowing in religion, and in reality very negligent about it. Their wisdom gave no sort of check to their vices! The moral turpitude of these unhappy habits, was indeed clearly made out: but their shameful consequences, their spreading infection, their various and accumulated mischiefs: their detestable vileness, and their dreadful end; were out of the question: were so far from being displayed in their true lights, or painted in their true colours, or loaded with their just aggravations and infinite ill effects, that they were not so much as seen, or shewn, or mentioned. The
ter-

terrors of the Lord, were things unheard of: hell not once named or named only to be despised: denied to be local, and distinguished away by philosophick fooleries! in contradiction not only to the express declarations of scripture, but to every principle of reason, and eternal justice! (as, by God's blessing, shall, in due time, be shewn) Emblems, examples, allusions, illustrations, enforcements, from poets, from orators, from historians, from moralists; from prophets, from apostles, from evangelists, from science, from scripture, from nature; were antiquated, exploded trifles! Hence the neglect of *Roman* and *Grecian* eloquence! Hence an equal contempt of *Livy* and *Thucydides*, of *Moses*, and the prophets! In one word, hence the united ruin of true learning and true

religion! and the triumph of ignorance, infidelity, and vice!

NOR is this the worst. Men who had no talents for mathematical learning, had however talents enough for absurd imitation; for a low mathematical manner in divinity; and as their great originals were now high in esteem, not only on account of mathematical knowledge, but likewise some bold singularities in religion, their servile imitators took care to out-do them, where only they could pretend to equal them, in the philosophic stiffness and formality of their style, and looseness of their principles.

IN the mean time, the rest of the world, perceiving, how free these men made with what were before accounted fundamentals of *Christianity*;

nity; and perceiving, at the same time, how utterly unanimated they were, either in the pulpit, or out of it, with any thing like a true *Christian* spirit; their souls as alien from the warmth of piety, the ardor of benevolence, and the zeal of *Christian* charity, as their styles from the interesting, the persuasive, the pathetic, the sublime, came quickly into a disregard of so fruitless a religion: justly concluding, that a religion which could not influence, could be of no use. It was natural to reflect, that if the immediate ministers of this religion, were seen to have it so little at heart, the professors of it at large, might be yet more at liberty, and less solicitous about it.

HENCE a carelessness and a coldness in the concerns of religion; and

both these in the natural order of things, soon succeeded with worse than neglect: for what men disregard, they disuse; and what they disuse, they quickly come to despise.

NOR was this the worst. Men were not only discouraged from studying and revering the scriptures, by perceiving how little true religion was promoted by that study, under the management of some of its most learned and eminent professors, and their followers; but also by being told, that this study was *difficult, fruitless, and dangerous*; and a public, an elaborate, an earnest dissuasive from this study, for the very reasons now mentioned, enforced by two well-known examples, and believed from a person of great eminence in the church, hath already pass'd often enough thro' the

the press, to reach the hands of all the clergymen in *Great-Britain* and *Ireland*. God, in his great mercy, forgive the author!

A MAN of equal abilities, with another turn of mind, would have exhorted the clergy to a noble emulation in conquering the difficulties of this study, yet behind : from the glory of those great men, who led the way with so much honour, in so arduous an undertaking : would have represented the study of the noblest writings the world was ever blessed with, as infinitely the noblest of all others, and manifestly the most useful ; as tending, eminently above all others, to *perfect holiness in the fear of God* ; and, in consequence of that, to promote, to perfect, and to perpetuate the
human

human happiness, both in heaven and in earth.

AND lastly, instead of discouraging the clergy, from the ill success of two men, he would have encouraged them from the good success of thousands.

WHEREAS the former conduct, seems little less extravagant, than it would be in a preacher, to dissuade his audience from endeavouring to go to heaven, because *Lucifer* fell.

BUT this is not all. We are degenerated into all the extremes of ill writing as well as thinking ! An insipid affectation of polite ease, and classic elegance, hath, with the advantage of a very negligent profaneness, done almost as much mischief, in the works of one man, as the
oppo-

opposite error, in all the rest. And many are such professed admirers of the writings of both kinds, as to unite these extremes, (the dry, and the florid formal) with great success in their own.

THIS is the true state of stile and taste among us! Vile principles, and wretched writings, beget one another, like infections and diseases: infections that destroy all health and good habits where-ever they come.

THIS is the state of our corruption; but where to hope for our recovery; that's the distress! Alas! if it is to be hoped for only from the introduction of right thinking, and better writing, I fear it is yet far off. Can any man, who hath any idea of right thinking or good writing, hope that either will succeed in
such

such an age ! Can he hope that *human means* will succeed, where *inspiration* fails ! That *his* writings will be regarded, where the *prophets* and *evangelists* are despised ! where *T—* is preferred to *Solomon*, and *C—* to *Christ* ?

WHERE infinitely the best and noblest of all writings are in disgrace, it is natural that the vilest should be in honour.

THE works of quaint, fantastick rhapsodists ; of mean, abandon'd, underling mortals ; of dry divines, and mathematical moralists : These are, these must be, in the present state of things, the reigning writers, and writings ! the standards of perfection and excellence !

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THE man who hath the stupid ignorance, or hardened effrontery ! to insult the revealed will of God ; or the petulant conceit to turn it into ridicule : or the arrogance to make his own perfections the measure of the divinity : or, at best, that can collate a text, or quote an authority, with an insipid accuracy : or demonstrate a plain proposition, in all the formality of *A's* and *B's* ; * these are now the only men worth mentioning ; the only writers worth reading, for improvement ; or remembering for applause. Nor *Bacon*, nor *Barrow*, nor *Tillotson*, nor *Addison*, (living writers must not be mentioned) nor *Plato*, nor *Plutarch*, nor *Cicero*, nor *Demosthenes*,

* I would not have the reader imagine, that I here intend any aspersions on the learned and ingenious author of *The religion of nature delineated* : or any other man of eminence in that way. I censure nothing but absurd imitation.

are to be once named with these ! These are the important men, whose weight hath at once sunk down the eloquence and elegance of *Rome* and *Athens*. And, what is infinitely more to be lamented, the wisdom, the dignity, the sublimity, the majesty, of the sacred writings !

IF men of genius are found to write in such an age, we may well conclude, that nothing but the strongest sense of duty forced them to it : for otherwise, tho' a man of any degree of merit, could hope to be so happy, as to escape the weight of envy, party, personal, or national prejudices, yet, to what purpose should he write ! To emulate the applause of such writers as are now in vogue, were a mean, ignoble view. To write for the praise of this age ! An age which hath no
relish

relish for any thing beyond the wit of profane scurrility, or the formality of a dry, unanimated dissertation : To what purpose, unless to become despicable in his own eyes, and detestable to God and goodness !

To write *for* such an age were wicked ; and to write *against* it, vain ; at least, vain to any other purpose, than the faint hopes of preserving the few yet untainted, in their integrity : and the fruitless fortitude of reproaching the rest ; reproaching them, at once, to their own reason, and to posterity ; appealing to a tribunal, which, the works they admire, will never reach ; or reach only to be condemned !

ALL joy to the applauded authors
of such an age, from the glory of
such

such admirers ! and to such admirers, from the blessings of such authors ! They are well matched. I know nothing more truly pitiable than both ; he only excepted, that could envy either. But tho' none should envy their happiness, all must lament their success. I mean all who have any regard for religion, vertue, and true learning. They have indeed gone on hitherto with surprising success : it is but persevering a little longer, and the next age will see none to reprove them.

I T H A N K God, I have lived to bear my testimony against them both. Against an age, where truth is either utterly despised, or treated in an infamous manner ! treated as if it were utterly incompatible with elegance and sublimity ! as if the proper badges of its majesty disgraced

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graced it! as if that which gave it its efficacy, impaired its evidence, Demonstration, with these men, loses its very name, and nature, if it attempts subjects apparently obscure: (where only it is wanted) and perhaps yet more, if it clears them: Especially, if the least light of genius shines about it; for light in this case, has all the effects of darkness, upon eyes long accustomed to the dark: such men can see no more about it, but that it is new; or some, perhaps, more sagacious and clear-sighted, may perceive it *pretty*: and, in excess of civility, pronounce it, *ingenious*. And, in truth, that, is going a great way, with people, that are so little accustomed to any thing that can properly be called so.

IF in this deplorable state of things, there are yet any of the

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clergy

clergy, (as, God be praised, there are) who neither, deterred by *difficulties and discouragements*, nor seduced by favours, and the fashion, still retain their zeal, their integrity, and a true taste, yet how few are they, and how faint! How unequal to the flood that drives against them! How forced to real or seeming compliances; and how frightened to dissent.

THESE right-thinking men, are doubtless very good judges of a right and a reasonable conduct; but, at the same time, they very well know, that the most reasonable conduct, is not always the wisest, with regard to this world; is not the most direct road to fame and fortune: prudential compliances, and humble applications to Great men, (so men in great stations will always be called) these are the
reputed

reputed arts to rise! and if they really are so, and no merit will avail without them, there is no doubt but they will duly be regarded by such as resolve to become great, and think this the true way to be so; to those whom God hath formed to another way of thinking, who have confined their ideas of merit, to loyalty, learning, religion, &c. duty is honour; and the solid joys of a good conscience, solid glory!

It is the misfortune of these men, to read of times, wherein true merit was accounted the true means of advancement, wherein securities were said to be given, for good abilities, not compliances; at least, where these gifts of God were not regarded as just objections to advancement: I will not take upon me to say, that these happy times are not such; nothing is more

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common, than to see the happiest and best times more than negatively abused.

THEY have heard of times, wherein writers, on the side of revealed religion, could inspire indignation against sin, and abhorrence of its abettors ; wherein the same men, who had all imaginable regard for the reasonable doubter, and candid enquirer after truth, had all imaginable contempt and abhorrence of the petulant caviler ! and could paint out, the turbulent, abandoned infidel, as the worst pest of society ! The enemy of God and goodness ! A wretch that lived not only to the ruin of the world, but to the disgrace of human nature ! An infection that should be dreaded as a plague ! Alas, this infection is now become familiar ! No men are better received, or more caressed, than

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than the most abandoned ! Nay, one would think, that to be so, were the best recommendation ! This, I think, is undeniable : that to despise principles, and laugh at religion, is the very test, if not of true merit, at least, of good abilities ! And it is notorious, that men have risen to great renown on this single account, who had been despicable on every other.

IN this state, it is no wonder to see the very names and natures of things inverted ; it is no wonder to see, that, merit, is demerit, and demerit, merit : so utterly regardless are we of that dreadful woe denounced by the prophet against them, that *call evil, good, and good, evil ; that put darkness, for light, and light, for darkness !*

THERE was a time, when human nature was believed to be corrupt : at least, suspected of some little partiality (I had almost said, prejudice) in favour of vice ; and religion was then thought of some use, to secure men from the temptations of sin, and the seducements of their own hearts. To hear the discourses, and read the writings of the wise men of this age, one would be tempted to think, that religion were the terror of all others in this world, which mankind ought most to be afraid of ; most upon their guard against ; and that there was no one propension in human nature, or prejudice incident to it, half so strong, or so destructive, as those that sway them in favour of virtue, and the fear of God.

As

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As this new, refined way of thinking, is now predominant, it is no wonder, if some even of the clergy are carried away with it: it is no wonder, if the loud din, and incessant clamour of *priestcraft*, *prejudice*, and *persecution*; (a clamour as loud, as if the fires of *Smithfield*, were never out; as if every parson in the land were an inquisitor, and every jail crouded with hereticks) have either confounded them into conviction, that there is some ground for all this outcry, (against all the evidence of demonstration to the contrary;) or, at least, subdued them into silence.

IN this sad situation, it is no wonder, if a truly *Christian* preacher, is a character, not always met with in the clergy; or a truly *Christian* hearer, among the laity.

What can be more common than to see men go to church, (I mean some of those few polite persons, that sometimes think it worth while to go thither) not to serve God, to be instructed, to confess their sins, to repent, and be reclaimed; but meerly as they go to other great assemblies, to be *entertained*? And in this case, it cannot be matter of much surprize, if some of the clergy study only how to make the entertainment as agreeable as they can; and forget every higher praise, and nobler purpose of their profession: if they can preach *prettily*, or, at most, make a good moral discourse, it is all they wish, or their audience desire.

I WOULD not be mistaken; I mean neither to reproach the clergy, (there are many religious, learned

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learned, and truly *Christian* preachers among them,) nor to decry morality (there is no religion without it); my intention is no more, than to exhort such of that sacred order, as may have forgotten their true character, to return diligently to it; to beseech them to remember, that the earnest, the instructive preacher, the pathetick, the sublime, the christian orator, These are the true characters of the ministers of the gospel: these are characters which will always be honourable and amiable even in the eyes of their enemies, and perhaps not the less so, for being too often less advantageously distinguished than they deserve. To put them in mind, *to cry aloud, to lift up their voice like a trumpet, to shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins:* to put them in mind, that
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tho' morality is essential to true religion, yet is not the only thing a Christian audience should hear of. Should they hear nothing of the love and fear of God, the demerit of man, and the degeneracy of human nature, the redemption of the world, the merits and mediation of *Jesus Christ*, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, and the judgment of the last day! the importance of prayer, of private and of publick worship; the importance and efficacy of the Christian ordinances; and the indispensable duty of an humble and diligent attendance at the sacrament of the Lord's supper; the endless rewards of righteousness, and retributions of guilt, the horrors of iniquity, even in this world, and the eternal torments that await it in the next: Are not these the best means and motives; the most effectual, the
only

only effectual, motives to morality! *knowing the terrors of the Lord* (says the apostle) *we persuade men.* Will *moral rectitude* and the *beauty of virtue* effectually govern the vices and passions of such beings as we are? Will they controul ambition, subdue appetite, and arrest revenge? Idle and ignorant! and therefore the best I can say of these plausible moralists, and their performances, is, what our Saviour said of those who *tythed mint and rue, and passed over JUDGMENT,* and the FEAR OF GOD; *This ought ye to have done, AND NOT TO LEAVE THE OTHER UNDONE.*

BUT is this the worst complaint that lies against the clergy? who are reported the great patrons of infidelity? who are said to encourage it by their silence, and countenance by their coldness! who
are

are charged with crying up the light of nature, against the light of the gospel? Whose preaching is said to proclaim it, whose principles to infer it, unnecessary? *Pudet hæc opprobria!*

IF these men are wrong charged as Christian Charity makes us hope they are, the remedy is in their own hands: let them vindicate their innocence to the world: If they are true Christians, and are not ashamed of the gospel and cross of *Christ*, let them speak out.

WILL they wait till the world grows worse? Does it need to grow worse? Are not the greatest crimes that can be named, perpetrated, and defended! perpetrated with impunity, and defended with applause, from the influence of those very principles, which they are
believed.

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believed either to embrace or to abet! I shall not descend to particulars; the detail were dreadful!

IF men that abet these principles, imagine themselves not accountable to their Maker, are they yet not accountable to their king and country, for all the evils derived upon society, by those immoralities they cause or increase? And for the murder of subjects, and fellow-citizens, the avowed effects of these doctrines?

IF these mortals only murdered, each himself, or his friend, some, perhaps, might imagine, that the world were better without them; and Christian charity might hope that God permitted them, to incur this guilt, in prevention of greater; but to murder innocent children, (without the influence of super-

superstition) in cold blood, upon a principle of duty ; nay, of humanity? Is a horror, till now, unheard-of! A horror unknown to heathenism!

To what perdition will these doctrines drive us! if this be the humanity of *free-thinking*, what is cruelty? Can any man consider this, and not be struck with that reflection of *Solomon*, *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel?* And yet could we imagine it ended here? could it terminate only in murder, it might be born.

IF others are calm under these calamities, for my own part, I neither envy, nor upbraid their serenity. They will, I hope, forgive the infirmity of meaner mortals, who cannot see the ruins of
infi-

infidelity without horror! who cannot survey the destruction of the giddy, the sensual, the ambitious, the unwary world around them, with a cold unconcern. Methinks it is but a poor consolation to a Christian spirit, to be innocent of the evils it beholds. And if others can delight and glory in them, God forgive them! And yet upon reflection, sure they have but little room to glory in the ruin they have wrought! for besides the horror of so hellish a satisfaction, is it not possible they may be permitted by God to work these evils in the world for their sins, (to fill up the measure of their iniquity!) as others to endure them for theirs? But what does this infer? More worth, or more vileness! Alas, the severity of the chastisement no way infers the dignity of the scourge! tho' they have said with the proud boaster in *Isaiah*

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(c. x. 13, &c.) *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent : I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped: yet may we reply upon them with the prophet, Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith? As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up; as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.*

WERE these instruments, the prophet speaks of, sensible to monition, it were easy to acquaint them with their intrinsic worth : to let them, know, that they were, at best, but brass and wood; their mischiefs mighty! but their materials, mean.

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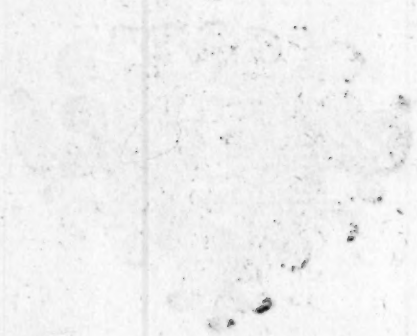
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The Coxley

By the Hon. John Coxley, M.P.
for the County of Devon.
In a Letter to the Hon. John Lubbock, M.P.
for the County of Devon.
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Vol. 1. 1871.



THE
INTRODUCTION.



T hath been objected to the first part of this work, that the writings of *Moses* are there considered as divinely inspired, without being first proved to be so. But this objection arises from not rightly attending to the title of the book ; in which it is not proposed to examine the revelations given, but *declared to be given*.

THE author observed two things mainly insisted upon, in the writings of those great men who now govern the world. The first was, that revelation never was necessary : the second, that the revelations pretended to be laid down in the scriptures, are loaded with absurdities.

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THESE two points he considered with all the attention he could, and the consequence of this consideration was, that he found revelation to be necessary (as far as he went) in every instance mentioned by *Moses*, i. e. in all those points wherein *Moses* tells us it was given; That revelation was absolutely necessary even in the utmost supposed perfection of human nature. And he takes upon him to say, that he hath demonstrated this, in the several instances, of food, language, knowledge of the creatures, and dominion over them. And if revelation was necessary in the utmost supposed perfection of human nature, the necessary consequence is, that it was more necessary in its degeneracy.

IN the next place, he found these revelations recorded by *Moses*, upon a due enquiry, clearly acquitted of absurdity to every thinking, intelligent reader; and he hath shewn them to be so. And that, in truth, the imputations with which they are loaded, are the manifest effects of absurdity, and gross ignorance, in the imputers.

MEN quarrel with the restraints there said to be laid on our first parents: In answer to this, he hath clearly shewn, that some Restraint was for the interest of
our

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our first parents ; and was absolutely necessary in token of dependance ; and that no restraint could be more rational than that recounted by *Moses*, in a state where moral restraints could not take place, or were not wanted.

MOSES represents *Adam* endowed with the knowledge of marriage, according to the law of nature. *Adam* could have that knowledge only from inspiration : nor could *Moses* say he had it, otherwise than by inspiration : inasmuch as he himself, in all human probability, had it not ; as, by God's blessing, shall be shewn hereafter.

MOSES represents *Eve* as deluded by a serpent to eat the forbidden fruit, from the hopes of acquiring more knowledge. That temptation hath been proved to be the strongest and the wisest that could be devised. It hath been clearly shewn, that she saw the serpent eat the fruit, and become vocal and rational, as she thought, by eating it : and that upon this supposition, her hopes of approaching the divine perfection in knowledge, were well founded. So that this scheme of deception, tho' at first sight seemingly absurd, was, in truth, the wisest, the most subtil spirit of hell could invent : and consequently, far above the power of *Moses* to devise.

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It was also shewn, that *Adam* and *Eve* had, in the curse of the serpent, a demonstration that this delusion was wrought by a spirit of superior subtilty, acting by the organs of the serpent.

MOSES represents God, as inflicting a peculiar curse upon *Eve*, on this occasion ; and it hath been shewn, that this curse still rests upon her daughters. And if the proofs offered on that head, are thought defective, or inconclusive, the author here declares, that he should be glad to see a fair effort from the infidel world to confute them.

MOSES represents the sacrifice of *Abel*, as accepted with approbation by Almighty God : (a supposition much ridiculed by libertines) The author of *Revelation Examin'd*, hath demonstrated, that sacrifices were of divine institution ; and that many ends of infinite wisdom and goodness were answered by that institution. A demonstration as clear as any in *Euclid*.

MOSES affirms, that God deluged the world. The fact hath been proved in the first part of this work, by such complicated and accumulated evidence, as I believe, no infidel will attempt to overthrow. *Moses* then is demonstrated to be a true historian ;
and

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and if he is found faithful in the relation of facts, of all others the least credible, and circumstances above the power of human wisdom to devise, it is incumbent upon the adversaries of revelation, to tell us, how he could have this knowledge, otherwise than by inspiration. It is evident he must have it either by inspiration, or such tradition as demonstrates its own truth: and either way his veracity is thus far established.

How far he is credible in his subsequent relations, I mean, how far he is evinced to be so, in the following dissertations, the reader will best judge for himself.



REVE -



Revelation Examined.

VOL. II.

DISSERTATION I.

*Concerning the grant of animal food
made to Noah after the flood.*



WE learn from the ninth chapter of *Genesis*, that This grant was limited. soon after the Flood, the charter of dominion over the animal World, given to *Adam*, was enlarged to *Noah*: the Creatures being now granted to him, and, in him, to mankind, for food; but granted, however, under this plain restriction, that they should not eat the blood with the flesh. This appears from the third and fourth verses of that chapter: verse 3. *Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you; even as the green herb, have*

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I

2 REVELATION *Examined, &c.*

I given you all things : Here is the grant. After that immediately follows the restriction; *but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.* Here you see the grant is limited; and this limitation plainly teaches us, that tho' man was allowed to eat the flesh of the creatures, yet he was not allowed to eat the blood with it.

Now one obvious apparent reason of this restriction, is, to prevent unnecessary cruelty in the use of the creatures. Tho' God, in his goodness, allowed us to eat them, yet the same goodness, would not allow us, to be wantonly cruel or brutal, in their destruction: would not allow us, to devour them piece-meal, or to eat them alive, like wolves and tygers: but requires, that we should first dispatch them, by draining the blood from them: and this seems to be the sense of the *Jews* upon this text, when they tell us, that it prohibits the limb of a living creature: For if prohibiting the limb of a living creature, be not a prohibition of cruelty to the creature, it is certainly a prohibition, of no sense, or * significance.

* "*Legem, qua est, Gen. 9. 4. post diluvium datam humano generi, quam vulgo nunc interpretantur Judaei de membro animalis vivi non edendo, verustiores intellexere de non edenda carne simul cum ejus sanguine. Manifestum id facit Joseph. Hist. 1. 4. versiones 70. Aquila & Symmachi. Et sic sensisse Rab. Anan.*" &c. Grotius in *Acta Apost. c. 15.*

REVELATION *Examined, &c.* 3

It is a fundamental doctrine with them,
 * that revelations were given to mankind,
 from the beginning ; that God gave *Adam*,
 six grand principal precepts, by which to
 conduct his life, and govern society ; and
 these, they say, are the fundamental princi-
 ples of the law of nature, and are as fol-
 low ;

First, To *abstain from idolatry*. Secondly, To *bleſs the Name of God* ; or, as others ex-
 press it, *to abstain from malediction of the Divine Name*. Thirdly, To *abstain from murder*. Fourthly, *From adultery*, or the pollution of impure mixtures. Fifthly, *From theft*. And sixthly, To *appoint judges to be guardians of these precepts* ; or, in general, to preserve publick justice. And that to these six, given to *Adam*, a seventh was added to *Noah*, viz. To *abstain from the limb of a living creature*. Not that it was lawful to eat the limbs of living creatures, before *Noah* ; for it always was unlawful, before the flood : (God not having then granted the animal world to man for food) : but because, upon the enlargement of the

These seven pre-
 cepts of the
 Sons of *Noah*.

* Vid. *Selden de jure nat. & gent. juxta sent. Heb. l. 1*
 c. 9. 10. 11.

4 REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c.

first right of dominion over the creatures, when they were granted to man for food, under the limitation now mention'd, this precept to *Noah*, was added to the six before given to *Adam*. And these seven precepts they call, *The seven precepts of the sons of Noah*, that is, the rules, which all the descendants of *Noah*, were obliged to observe; and consequently, the observance of which, they exacted from all the *Gentiles* which dwelt among them.

As for themselves, tho' they also, as descended of *Noah*, were bound to the same observances, yet were they tied down to other ordinances, and restraints, besides these. Such as, circumcision, derived from *Abraham*; and the precepts of the law, derived from *Moses*; from which, other nations were exempted; but the seven precepts of the sons of *Noah*, were rules of duty, which the whole race of mankind, were obliged to observe, in common with them.

WHETHER the *Jews* are right in these opinions, is not now my concern to enquire; my chief view in recounting them, is, to let the reader see, that in their sense, a new revelation was now necessary: that it was so, in other respects, does not appear:
Forasmuch

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 5

Forasmuch as *Noah* being a prophet, and preacher of righteousness, must be presumed sufficiently acquainted with the Divine Will; and sufficiently enabled to instruct his children in it. But thus much, I think, must be allowed, that a new grant required a new revelation; also, that infinite wisdom and goodness required, that this grant should be limited.

The limitation
in the grant
to *Noah* intended
to prevent
cruelty.

N O R can we reasonably doubt this,

I F we consider, that when God gave Man a right to the creatures for food, he foresaw that this indulgence would many ways be abused: and therefore guarded against that abuse, as a wise legislator should, by such a prohibition, as, if observed (as he intended it) would effectually prevent it. He knew, that the earth was *full of violence*, i. e. of cruelty and outrage, before the flood: and that this right now given, of destroying the creatures for food, would, if not wisely tempered and restrained, naturally tend to inflame men to cruelty; that the best way to prevent this, was, by prohibiting all unnecessary cruelty in the exercise of that right.

B E S I D E S this, upon the grant of dominion over life, there was an apparent necessity, of establishing a clear distinction,

6 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

between the lives of brutes, now granted for food, and the lives of men, made sacred, by the seal of their Maker's image, stamped upon them; and therefore, tho' the prohibition of cruelty to the creatures, was a most proper introduction to the prohibition of cruelty to man, which immediately follows it: it was thought proper, to enforce that prohibition yet farther, by the sacred distinction, of man's being formed in the image of God; for *in the image of God, made he man.*

IF God would not allow man to be cruel to other creatures, even tho' their lives were put into his power, much less, would he permit one man, to be cruel to another, or to take away the life of another, over whom he had given him no right, no power; and therefore he declares, that the man who shall dare to incur such guilt, shall have severe vengeance executed upon him; and that he will require the blood so spilt, at the hand both of man and beast.

THE expression here used, of requiring any thing *at the hand* of a beast, must, doubtless, sound harsh to ears unused to such an idiom: and therefore we should know, that the *Hebrew* word יד, which is here interpreted a hand, is a word of large extent, and signifies also strength, and power: and consequently,

consequently, the meaning of it, in this place, is, that God will require the blood of man, from the strength or power of every beast; or rather, as it is in the original, *of every living creature*, i. e. from the strength and power of the whole brute world; and also *at the hand*, or from the strength of man. Nay, *at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man*, saith the Lord. All which seems plainly to imply, that God would arm the whole creation against the murderer. As nothing is more notorious, than the punishment of that crime by signal interpositions of the Divine Providence, in a great variety of very extraordinary ways, and methods, and by a great variety of very extraordinary instruments; as we know, God hath sometimes armed even the meanest insects, to the destruction of such wretches. As in the case of *Herod, Sylla,* and *Philip* the second of *Spain*; three notorious murderers, who were devoured with insects from their own bosoms and bowels. And that these judgments are agreeable to the sense of mankind, we may learn, as from many other instances, so also from that passage in the twenty-eighth chapter of the *Acts of the Holy Apostles*; where the *Barbarians* observing the viper to fasten upon *St. Paul's* hand, immediately concluded him a murderer, whom, tho' he had escaped

8 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

the sea, yet *vengeance would not suffer to live.*

HAVING thus explained the grant to *Noah*, and shewn you, that cruelty to the creatures, is plainly prohibited in the words subsequent to it, and that this prohibition was a very proper introduction to the prohibition of murder, which immediately follows it, under the most solemn denunciation of vengeance from God, upon the offender: and under the most sacred distinction of the dignity and importance of the human life, above the brutal: I now proceed to enquire,

Whether eating blood is forbidden.

First, WHETHER the eating of blood, is not also forbidden by this prohibition of eating the flesh with the blood? and, if it be, I shall,

Secondly, ENQUIRE into the reasons of this prohibition.

Thirdly, I WILL shew you, that this prohibition still lies upon all mankind: and upon *Christians* in a peculiar manner. And,

Lastly, I SHALL, by God's assistance, answer all the objections, of any weight, that can be brought against this doctrine.

First

First then, I AM to enquire, whether feeding upon blood be forbidden in this prohibition: *But flesh, with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.* And surely the most natural and obvious interpretation of the words, is this: Tho' I give you the flesh, you must not eat the blood with it; or, in other words, Tho' I give you the flesh, I do not give you the blood with it, because the blood is the life. *

WHEN princes give grants of lands to any of their subjects, we find it usual with them to reserve some royalties upon those lands, as memorials of dependance, and in token that the original property was in them; and mines and minerals, are among such royalties. Now, supposing that all lands, contained mines and minerals, such as are wont to be excepted, if no mention had been made of mines and minerals, in the grant, probably they would be understood to be conveyed with the land, by such grant; but if the grant were thus expressly limited; You shall have such or such lordships or manors; but you shall not have the mines and minerals with the land (for such and such reasons) would any man, in his senses, ima-

* And so the learned authors of the universal history understand the precept, N. 2. p. 114.

10 REVELATION *Examin'd* &c.

gine, that the grantee had a right to mines and minerals from such a grant? No surely: And is not the case parallel in the point before us? You shall have every living creature for food: but you shall not eat the blood with the flesh. Can any man reasonably infer from hence, that he has a right to eat the blood? At least, I think, no man can fairly infer that here is an express grant made of the blood; and, without such a grant, it is certain we may not eat it; because no man has a right to any creature, or any part or portion of a creature, but from the gift of the Creator.

BUT if there yet remain any doubt upon this head, yet since this is a grant from God, I believe it will be allowed, that God understands, and consequently, explains his own grants best: Now we find, that God himself expressly prohibits the eating of blood, not only to the *Jews*, but to all strangers that dwelt among them; (as you may read in the seventeenth chapter of *Leviticus*, at the tenth verse), *And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and I will cut him off from among his people.* This certainly is a very solemn and dreadful prohibition! and when God hath made this
solemn

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 11

solemn prohibition, he immediately adds the reason of it, verse 11. *For the life of the flesh is the blood.* And is not this very reason contained in the prohibition to *Noah*? *But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.*

THIS prohibition is also more fully explained in the 12th chapter of *Deuteronomy* the 23d and 24th verses, *Only be sure that thou eat not the blood, for the blood is the life; and thou mayst not eat the life with the flesh; thou shalt not eat it, thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.*

Now the reason of abstaining from blood being the same here as in the command of abstinence to *Noah*, viz. (because it is the life) it is evident that this prohibition, tho' more enlarged, is but a comment upon that; from whence it follows, beyond all doubt, that the prohibition of eating the blood, with the flesh, was meant an absolute prohibition of blood, whether in the animal or out, and so (as I apprehend) the *Jews* now universally understand it.

BUT this point will, I think, be placed beyond the reach of all reasonable doubt, by reflecting upon what I before observed in the dissertation upon sacrifices, that they were divinely instituted: and in mercy to mankind; and that one plain document conveyed

12 REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c.

conveyed by this institution, was, that God would accept the life of the creature offered up upon the altar, in lieu of the offender's life, forfeited by his transgression; now, if it be believed, that the way of offering up the creature's life, before the flood, as well as after, was, by pouring out his blood upon the altar; (which, I think, cannot reasonably be doubted *); and if *Noah* understood all this, I desire to know, what *Noah* could naturally understand by the prohibition of eating the flesh with the life, *i. e.* the blood; but plainly this, that since the lives of the creatures were still to be offered up upon the altar, after the grant of eating flesh, as well as before, the blood, which was the life, must still be poured out to make atonement; and consequently, not diverted to any other use?

CAN any considering man find the least room to doubt, whether every thing essential in the business of sacrifice, was instituted antecedent to the law of *Moses*: or whether blood is an essential? Things of less consequence, the distinction of creatures, clean, and unclean, the offering of fat, and the doctrine of burnt-offerings, were well understood before the law; And can we imagine that an essential was unknown?

* See a passage to this purpose in *Sanchoniatho's* hist. gener. 5.

IF then blood was sacred to the making of atonement, before the grant to *Noah*, (as there is not the least reason to doubt that it was), Why should it not continue so after? Does that grant make any alteration in that point? If it was given for atonement under the law, Can we suspect that it was given for any other purpose before? Is it not more rational to believe a consistency and uniformity in the purposes and appointments of Providence? If *Noah* knew, that the lives of the creatures were appointed to be offered up, in lieu of the lives of offenders, forfeited by their transgressions, what other instruction needed he upon the grant of the creatures for food, but to be told, that the *blood was the life*, and that he must not eat it, even with the flesh? that he was not to eat it, separate, was no way necessary to be told him.

SLAYING and SACRIFICING, are known to be synonymous terms, in the oldest learned languages; in *Latin*, and *Greek*, and *Hebrew*; what can be more naturally inferred from hence, than that these actions were, originally, one; and continued to be so, after the grant of the creatures for food; especially, since reason required it should be so? For if men slaying the creatures for sustenance, could at the same time, make atone-

14 REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c.

atonement for sin, and a religious and thankful acknowledgment of the divine bounty in the grant of such food; Were it wise to neglect to do so? And shall this practice be yet censured of superstition? Can the same thing be at once the dictate of true religion and reason, and folly?

It is true, this duty was reduced to certain regulations under the *Jewish* œconomy; and slaying and sacrificing might possibly have been distinct actions among them, after the establishment of the temple-service; but, I believe it will be allowed, that they continued to be one and the same, long after this, with the wisest and most religious of the heathen world: and it is certain, that this distinction among the *Jews*, made no alteration in the duty of abstinence from blood; nor does it follow, but that the creatures might still be killed, even by them, under a constant sense of religion and gratitude to God, tho' not with all the formalities of a temple sacrifice.

BUT there is still a difficulty upon this point, which is this, that tho' the *Jews* were prohibited to eat any creature that died of itself, and consequently, had the blood in it, yet they might give it to an household proselyte, or sell it to a stranger; as you may read *Deut. xiv. 21*.

BUT

BUT the reason of the distinction, there added, will, in a good measure, clear this difficulty; *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God*; i. e. tho' such pollutions are less regarded among other nations, yet you being set apart from other people, by a peculiar devotion to God, may not allow yourselves in them; and what the penalty of this pollution was, both upon the *Jew* and *Profelyte*, we learn from the seventeenth chapter of *Leviticus*, that they were *to wash their cloaths, and bath themselves in water, and be unclean until the even, and then they should be clean*. From whence it appears, that this prohibition, was, what men call merely *ceremonial*, even with regard to them; and calculated more to keep up their separation from other nations, than to guard against any crying guilt in the action itself.

NOW if any man ask, Why this strange difference between the penalty of eating blood out of the creature, and in it, that the first should be death, and the last only a temporary pollution, of a few hours? I answer, that the reason is obvious, from what hath been already observed; because the blood being sacred to the making atonement for sin, was not to be applied to any other

16 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

other use; * but when the creature died of itself, the reason of the prohibition then ceased; because that atonement could not then be made: the blood could not then be poured out, or sprinkled upon the altar; nor was it wilfully diverted, or desecrated from the sacred purpose to which it was devoted; and consequently, eating it, not under the form of blood, but in an indiscriminated mixture with the flesh, was not a formal abuse or desecration of it: and so could not deserve the penalty due to such a desecration, in contradiction to the solemn command of God.

ALSO the precept of abstinence from blood, being calculated to prevent cruelty to the creatures; that reason also ceased, when there was no room for cruelty, as in the case of a dead carcase. In a word, the main reasons of abstinence ceased in this case; and the guilt of transgression ceased with them.

AND thus having, I hope, sufficiently proved, that the eating of blood was prohibited in the grant of the creatures for food

* Hence we find, that when a Jew was to kill any creature for his private use, he was yet to bring the blood to be sprinkled upon the altar, *Lev. xxvii.* from verse 1. to verse 6. inclusive.

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 17

made to *Noah*, and answer'd the only objection of weight that lies against that opinion: I now proceed to the second point propos'd; which was, To enquire into the reasons of this prohibition.

AND here it is evident, that if we could assign no other reason for this prohibition, than that assign'd by God himself in the law, *viz.* that the *blood was the life*, and was appointed to make atonement upon the altar: I say, if we could assign no other reason, should we not be infatuated if we did not fully acquiesce in this? Nay, should we not be worse than infatuated, if we did not fully acquiesce in all the determinations of God, without any reasons assigned for them? and without any other information concerning them, than a clear rational assurance that they are his determinations? Is human nature capable of a wiser or more rational conduct, than an entire and humble submission to the directions and decisions, of an infinitely-wise and good Being? And do we need more motives to such a submission, than a reasonable assurance that they are his decisions and directions? Is any mortal so weak, or wicked, as to imagine we have a right to all the reasons of his appointments? Or to disobey till we are well inform'd, and fully satisfied in them? Is any man so monstrous as to imagine,

Reasons of the prohibition.

18 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

gine, that infinite wisdom and goodness can see no reason for decisions or directions, which we cannot, or should not? And if God can see reasons for precepts and prohibitions, which it is neither possible nor proper for us to know, what means this monstrous doctrine *, so much cry'd up of late, that no positive institutions or restraints of natural liberty, can come from God! *i. e.* in truth, that there is no instance or extent of wisdom, in the Divine Nature, with regard to the government of free agents, of which we are not competent judges. A supposition as wild, and as wicked, as ever yet enter'd into the heart of man.

As to the precept before us, of not eating the blood with the flesh of the creatures, it is evident, that besides the reason expressly assign'd by God himself for this prohibition, there are also several others (very wise and very important) why it should be made.

In the first place then, let me ask any man, that is capable of rational reflection, Whether he imagines it would be hard or unreasonable in Almighty God, when he granted man a right to take away the lives of other creatures for food, to make such a

* See Christianity as old as the creation, ch. 10. 11.

REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.* 19

reserve in that grant, as might be a perpetual monition to mankind, that God was the author and giver of life? It is certain, such a monition could have no ill effect; and might, at the same time, be of infinite advantage, in keeping up a constant sense of dependance upon God, and gratitude to him, in the minds of his creatures. And what could answer these ends better, than reserving the blood for sacred use; and assigning that very reason, because it was the life; as a natural and necessary monition to mankind, that God was the author and giver of life?

WHEN God gave man the fruits of the earth for food, yet he gave them with an exception to the fruit of the tree of knowledge; and in the same analogy, when he gives him the flesh of the creatures for food, he gives it with an exception to the blood. Unlimited grants would but inflame our vanity, and blot out that sense of dependance upon the Divine Being, which is equally necessary to our humility and our happiness.

AGAIN, if God foresaw that an unlimited grant would be the cause of much unnecessary cruelty to the creatures, that surely was a sufficient reason with Infinite Goodness, why a limitation should be made.

20 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

Now if we find such cruelties wantonly exercis'd, where such limitations are not known, or not regarded, then surely we must conclude, that the limitation was merciful, and wise, and well appointed. *Plutarch* tells us, * that it was customary in his time, to run red hot spits thro' the bodies of live swine: and to stamp upon the udders of sows ready to farrow, to make their flesh more delicious: and, I believe, Christians have heard of whipping pigs, and torturing other creatures to death, for the same reasons. † Could these cruelties be committed, if such men thought themselves bound in conscience to abstain from all unnecessary cruelty to the creatures? and to bleed them to death, with all the dispatch they could, before they touch'd them for food.

* In his discourses of eating flesh.

† I am assured, that it is not unusual with some people to wound certain kinds of fowl in the head, and then hang them up by the feet, till they beat their flesh tender, and themselves to death with their wings.

It is also a known custom in a neighbour nation, to keep oxen from food for many days together; and then beat them to death with battle-doers, by which means their flesh being pounded into a state approaching to putrefaction, the taste is greatly heightened to a vitiated palate. But if the love of tainted flesh be in truth a mark of politeness, the *Samoeids*, the most filthy and beastly of all human mortals, have the honour to enjoy it in common with the most polite *European* nation; but, however, with this disadvantage, that they have not yet learnt the refinement of beating poor brutes to death, to bring their flesh the sooner into that delicious state.

BUT

BUT this is not all : cruelties are congenial ; and rise by an easy gradation, from being practis'd upon brutes, to be exerted even against men. Thus it is notorious, that the *Scythians*, from drinking the blood of their cattle, proceeded to drink the blood of their enemies, (as *Herodotus* * assures us they did) and certainly the most natural means of guarding mankind, against such cruelties, was, to guard them against the least approaches to it ; by obliging them to abstain religiously from blood, and all unnecessary cruelty to the brute creation. And if evil foreseen to the brute creation from eating their blood, was a wise reason why such food should be prohibited to men ; evil foreseen to man himself, from such an allowance, will, I believe be own'd a very good additional reason for such a prohibition ; and will any man say, that the *Scythian* cruelty now mention'd is no evil ?

AGAIN, all animals that feed upon blood, are observ'd to be much more furious than others ; Will any man say, that much of their fury is not owing to their food ? Have not creatures of the same kind been found to differ greatly in their tempers, from

* Herod. l. 4.

22 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

the difference of their diet? I believe it will be allow'd, that blood is a very hot inflaming food, that such foods create choler*, and that choler easily kindles into cruelty. Even flesh is an inflaming fastidious diet; inspiring pride and insolence: and therefore with infinite wisdom was murder so solemnly and immediately prohibited by God, upon the permission of that food to mankind.

BUT here it is objected, that, in fact, men are found more cruel in some countries, where they live in an entire abstinence from flesh, than in others, where they indulge in it to the highest degree.

I ANSWER, That this objection no way weakens the force of my argument: since it is possible enough, that the influence of the climate, and evil institutions, in one country, may inflame men more to cruelty, than the influence of a hotter and more cholerick food, in a cooler climate, and under better institutions: But can it from thence be inferr'd, that a cholerick food does not inflame to cruelty?

BULL's blood was a common poison with the antients: can we imagine there was any

* Vide Grew's *Cosmol. sacra*, l. 4. c. 8.

peculiar malignity in the blood of that creature, above any other? Or may we not rather imagine, that the malignity is now only abated by the mixtures commonly conveyed into the stomach with it? It is doubtless matter of much consolation, to be assur'd, that the poison of our luxury is well qualified.

WE of these nations, who are wont to feed largely upon flesh, are observ'd to be remarkably subject to evil, scorbutick habits: And if physicians are right in ascribing these evils to our food, I believe it can scarce be denied, that the grosser less-digested juices of that food, contribute much more towards them, than those juices which are purer, and more digested; and therefore blood, as the grossest of all animal juices, must, of necessity, do most mischief.* And as grosser less digested juices, are less salutary, they must for that very reason be less elegant, and less pleasing to an untainted palate: And whereas it is found by experience, that bathing and cleanliness, are a

* Dr. Grew observes in his *Cosmol. sacra*, l. 4. c. 7. sec. 25. that no creatures have the rickets except men and dogs that feed on blood: and it is notorious, that blood is the great principle of corruption, and common seat of infection in all animals: And who knows how long, or how fully that infection may be fixed there before it discovers itself?

24 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

great relief from scorbutick infections, there is no doubt, but this was the very reason, why God prescrib'd washing the cloaths, and bathing in water, as the constant penalties of eating flesh with the blood in it.

AND as all flesh which hath the blood drain'd from it, is more salutary, and will keep better, and will consequently be more useful ; it is evident, that the ends of life and health, will be better answer'd by draining away the blood, with all the care we can, from all the flesh we eat ; but then it must be owned, that the purposes of luxury, as well as cruelty, will be far better served by the contrary practice ; for as the blood abounds with salts, and is the great principle of corruption, it is evident, that what men call the *high* taste, will be better consulted by letting the blood remain in the flesh, and blending it with it, by all the evil arts imaginable ; which can't be done in many cases, without forgetting our humanity.

AND forasmuch as the τὸ πνικτὸν κρέας (suffocated or strangled flesh) was in high esteem in point of deliciousness with all the antients, * and is so still with the present patrons of luxury, it is evident that the

* See *Plutarch* as above, and *Athenaus*.

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 25

apostles in enjoining abstinence from blood and things strangled, did so far prohibit luxury and intemperance, as well as cruelty. And so St. *Jerome* and *Casaubon* explain that part of the decree.

BUT here it may be objected, That men may be as cruel in bleeding, as in any other way of putting the creatures to death.

TO this I answer, first, that they cannot: All the art of man cannot devise half the cruelty to the creatures in draining the blood from them, as in eating them alive limb by limb, (a practice which the *Jews* believe more particularly forbidden by the prohibition to *Noah*); I also doubt whether all the arts of cruelty could make bleeding a death of so much misery, as starving, beating, whipping, torturing, and trampling to death, in the manner antiently, and even yet practised.

BESIDES this, where the ends of luxury cannot be served by bleeding, the temptations to cruelty are cut off; and in this is manifested the wisdom of God, in prescribing such a death to the creatures, as would, most effectually, prevent all temptations to cruelty. And God's intention in this matter once known, is an effectual prohibition of all unnecessary cruelty in killing the

26 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

the creatures, to all that fear him: Tho' neither this, nor any thing else, can absolutely correct the evil dispositions of men; or put cruelty out of their power.

BUT other deaths may be less cruel.

POSSIBLY they may, in particular instances, and circumstances; but would any other kind of death so universally and effectually prevent cruelty! and all the other evils consequent to the eating of blood! or attain all the ends of abstinence from it? if no other kind of death could answer all these ends, all these objections are ill grounded.

Eating blood
gave occasion
to idolatry.

FARTHER yet, *Maimonides* * assures us, that the eating of blood, gave occasion to one kind of early idolatry among the *Zabii* in the *East*, † the worship of dæmons, whose food, as they imagined, was blood; and therefore they who adored them, had communion with them, by eating the same food. And it is remarkable, that tho' they did eat blood, in honour of their dæmons, yet even *they* thought it foul and detestable food. And it is certain, that *Arnobius* upbraids the heathen with tearing and devouring goats

* See Dr. Patrick, vol. i. p. 463. Selden, l. 7. c. 1.

† *Maimon. more Nevo*, p. 3. c. 46.

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 27

alive, in honour of *Bacchus*, in that affected fury, to which they wrought themselves up, in the celebration of his mad and monstrous rites. *

Now if God had not foreseen these cruelties, corruptions, and inconveniencies, consequent to the eating of blood, Should we justly deem him infinitely wise? And if foreseeing them, he had not yet prohibited them in their cause, (which was at once the wisest, and the most effectual prohibition), Could we justly deem him infinitely good, and gracious to his creatures? When therefore, we find him, infinitely wise, in foreseeing, and infinitely good, in forbidding such abominable practices, Do we yet hesitate, to conclude such prohibitions the effects of infinite wisdom and goodness? And when we do conclude God's command of abstinence in this case, to be the effect of infinite wisdom and goodness, Can we conclude it consistent with any degree of wisdom and goodness in our selves, to despise such commands! and to live in open avowed contempt of them? Can any thing in nature be more shocking than such a conduct!

* *Adversus gentes*, l. 5.

28 REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c.

BUT here it may be asked, if one main intention of Almighty God, in prohibiting blood and things strangled, was, to restrain men from luxury, as well as cruelty, why did he not rather chuse to prohibit luxury and cruelty, in exprefs terms?

TO this I answer, That prohibiting the means was the sure way to prohibit the end. If God had only prohibited luxury and cruelty in general, every man's own temper, the custom of his country, his humanity, or inhumanity, his temperance, or gluttony, would have been the measures of that luxury and cruelty; and then, some would have been cruel as *Canibals*, savage as *Scythians*, and luxurious as *Sybarites*, without imagining they were so: and others, as falsely and foolishly merciful and abstemious, as the *Pythagoreans*: and so either the command would have been disobeyed, or the blessing defeated: tho', at the sametime, this conduct hath no way precluded God from giving particular exprefs prohibitions both of luxury and cruelty, in several parts of the scriptures.

BUT still it may be imagined, that *Christians* are now some way or other exempted from this abstinence, and therefore, to remove all mistakes of this kind, I now proceed

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 29

ceed to shew you, in the third place, that this prohibition of eating blood, lies upon all mankind to this day ; and upon *Christians* in a peculiar manner.

AND the proof of this lies, within the compass of one plain argument, obvious to every capacity ; which is as follows ;

IF the eating of blood never was permitted, either before the flood, or after the flood, or under the law, or under the gospel, then surely, no man in his senses, will say it is now lawful to eat it: Now that it never was permitted in any of these periods, is undeniable. Nay, the argument is yet stronger ; for it was not only not permitted in any of these periods, but, in truth, it is plainly enough prohibited in the first of them ; and, I think, as clearly prohibited in all the rest.

First, I SAY, the eating of any living creature, and consequently, of blood, is, not only not granted before the flood, but plainly enough prohibited, in that part of the curse denounced upon man after the fall ; *Cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it, all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee : and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread :*
till

30 REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.*

till thou return to the ground. Can any thing be plainer than that man is here condemn'd to eat bread, and the herb of the field, to the day of his death ! without the least surmise or hint of any higher grant or privilege of food, of any kind. You shall eat bread, and you shall eat the herb of the field. Is not the plain meaning of those words, that bread and herbs shall be your food ?

— If a prince gave any man a grant of certain lands, named in his patent, and mentioned in his grant, that this should be the estate ; Would any man in his senses believe, that he had a right to any other estate, by virtue of that grant ? Or that he was not limited to the lands there expressly mention'd ? And is not this the case in point ; God Almighty declares to *Adam*, bread and herbs shall be your food : Does any man imagine he had a right to any other food by virtue of that grant ? Or rather, that he was not plainly precluded from all other food, by that express peremptory prescription ?

AND thus we see that man had no right to the blood of the creatures before the flood. That he had no right after this, from the grant made to *Noah*, I have already, I hope, sufficiently shewn ; that no man had any right to it from any concession in the law of
Moses,

REVELATION *Examin'd, &c.* 31

Moses, but quite the contrary, is undoubted. The only question then is, Whether any such permission had been made under the gospel? And that there hath not, but the direct contrary, I now come to prove, from the 15th chapter of the *Acts*: where we read, that after a long and solemn debate, upon the question, Whether the *Gentile* converts to *Christianity*, were obliged to observe the law of *Moses*? it was at last determin'd that they were not; and that no more should be required of them, than to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. And accordingly, a most solemn decree was drawn up to that purpose, by the apostles, and elders, and the whole church at *Jerusalem*, and transmitted in letters to the brethren at *Antioch*, *Syria*, and *Cilicia*, by four deputies of principal note, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Judas* and *Silas*. And those letters were conceived in these terms;

The apostolick decree about blood and things strangled.

23. THE apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the *Gentiles*, in *Antioch*, and *Syria*, and *Cilicia*.

24. FORASMUCH as we have heard, that certain, which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying,

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saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment :

25. *IT seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas, and Paul ;*

26. *MEN that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

27. *WE have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.*

28. *FOR it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*

29. *THAT ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

Now if this decree be obligatory upon all *Christians*, then can it no longer be a doubt with any *Christian*, whether he is obliged to abstain from blood, and things strangled. And if the direction of any one apostle inspired of God, be obligatory, certainly it can be no doubt, whether a solemn
decision

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decision of all the apostles, expressly declaring the joint determination of the *Holy Ghost* in the point, be also obligatory.

THIS point must surely be out of all doubt with all that call themselves *Christians*, unless this decree hath since been rescinded. That if ever was formally repealed, is not pretended; and whether it be implicitly cancelled, by any contrary decisions of *Christ* and his apostles, will best be seen by examining the several arguments brought against it by the advocates for eating blood.

ALL which, that are of any weight, shall, by God's assistance, be fully examined in my next dissertation.





DISSERTATION II.

A short recapitulation of the precedent dissertation.



HAVING, in the foregoing dissertation, shewn you, that the eating of blood is forbidden by the prohibition of eating the blood with the flesh: and that this prohibition is founded upon very important reasons: 1st, To prevent cruelty to the creatures: 2dly, As a memorial that God is the author and giver of life: and 3dly, Because the lives of the creatures, were to be offered up to God in lieu of the lives of men forfeited by their offences: consequently, that the blood, which is the life, was consecrated to the making of atonement upon the altar: Having also shewn you, that the eating of blood never was permitted, either before the flood, or after; or under the law, or under the gospel; but, on the contrary, that it was, in truth, prohibited in every one of these periods: before the flood, all animal food was plainly

plainly enough prohibited, in that part of *Adam's curse*, which condemns him to eat *the herbs of the field, and bread in the sweat of his brow, till he returned to the dust*: thus was he levelled with the beasts in his food, says *Maimoindes* (*More Nevo*, p. 1. c. 2.) After the flood, a more express prohibition of blood is continued, in the restraint laid upon *Noah*; under the law, in that solemn command in the 17th chapter of *Leviticus*, both to the *Jews* and the strangers that sojourned with them, to abstain from all manner of blood; and under the gospel, by a solemn injunction of the apostolick council to the *Gentile* converts, to abstain *from blood and things strangled*.

THE only question then is, whether this apostolick decree hath been since repealed: and this will best appear, by considering the arguments for this repeal, produced by the advocates for eating blood; which I now come to examine.

Of the apostolick decree concerning blood and things strangled, whether it was only of temporary obligation.

FIRST then it is said, that this decree of the apostles was only temporary, to prevent giving offence to the *Jews*, in the infancy of the Christian religion; and consequently the reason of it, is long since ceased; and that cessation is a virtual repeal.

IN answer to this, I desire it may be considered, whether the reasons now mentioned, for abstaining from blood, do not equally extend to all ages and nations of the world: and if they do, it is evident this injunction of the apostles, had no peculiar relation, either to the infancy of the Christian religion, or to the people of the *Jews*, unless it be thought that the *Jews* are the only people in the world, who are obliged to abstain from cruelty to the creatures, or to recognize God as the author and giver of life; or that this nation only were entitled to the atonement made by blood; and if so, How came sacrifices instituted immediately after the fall? And how came blood to be prohibited to all the sons of *Noah*, before there was any such thing as a *Jew* in the world? This pretence then, seems very ill founded.

IT may indeed be urged with much more plausibility by *Christians*, that blood being consecrated to the making of atonement for sin, as a type of the sacrifice of *Christ*, and *that atonement being now received by his blood*, as *St. Paul* expresses it, in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the *Romans*, the reason of abstinence in this point, is now ceased; and consequently, that abstinence is no longer a duty.

BUT

BUT then it must be remembered in answer to this reasoning, that the apostolick decree against blood, was passed many years after this atonement was made ; and surely, it is no more unreasonable, (tho' I will not take it upon me to pronounce it strictly obligatory) to abstain from blood, now, in commemoration of the atonement made by the blood of *Christ*, for the sins of the whole world, than it was before, to abstain from it in view of that atonement. For barely to consider it in the light of gratitude, one would imagine, that the sense of an infinite benefit received, should in reason, and in duty, have no less weight with us, than the distant prospect and expectation of such a benefit : unless hope can render any observance more reverential, and more religious, than gratitude ; and should any one, that deems himself a *Freethinker*, imagine it ought (from a peculiarity of complexion, remarkable enough in this abused denomination of men) ; yet surely, his singularity in this point, cannot affect the other reasons of abstinence from blood, already assigned ; which must eternally hold, as long as cruelty to the creatures is a crime, or the recognition of God, as the author and giver of life, is a duty ; and this, one would think, an answer, more than sufficient to silence those important objectors, who call this an institution

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merely ceremonial, and positive ; for if even such of the divine injunctions as commonly go under that name, are found, upon enquiry, to have a solid foundation in reason, and a clear inseparable connection with the necessary and eternal nature of things, these gentlemen would do well to beware, how they hastily disclaim divine appointments ; lest in their enmity to revealed religion, they may haply be found fighting against reason, and nature ; like *Merope* * in the tragedy, who in the blindness of her fury, mistook her darling son, for her mortal enemy.

AGAIN, it is objected, That creatures which died of themselves, and consequently had the blood in them, might be given to the stranger, or sold to an alien ; and it is evident, that the stranger and alien were in this case permitted to eat blood.

I ANSWER, That this objection was sufficiently obviated in the precedent dissertation : and have only to add, that it may, with almost equal reason, be objected both to the *Jews*, and to us, that we eat blood in every creature we kill to this day, because it is impossible to drain it all from them. And what then ? the question is, concerning the

eating of blood separate from the creature, or eating the blood designedly left in the creature, to serve any end of luxury, or cruelty ; and eating blood in either of these ways, is what I esteem to be unlawful : the eating of blood, as such, was never imagined an action, simply, and in it self, sinful : tho' it was, and is, criminal, in certain circumstances, from the reason and nature of things ; as well as the divine prohibition ; and it was prohibited, for very wise, and very important reasons ; and when those reasons ceased, as in the instance objected, the prohibition ceased too ; and therefore this objection is so far from over-throwing the doctrine laid down, that, in truth, it confirms it ; for what can be a clearer proof, that the reasons of any divine prohibition are rightly assigned, than this, that as soon as those reasons cease, the prohibition ceases also ? When the creature died of it self, its blood could neither be poured out upon the altar for atonement, nor abused to idolatry ; nor revered, in recognition of God's being the author and giver of life : nor spilt, to prevent cruelty in the use of the creatures ; and therefore, there, such a small portion of it, as could not be separated from the flesh, was permitted to be eaten with it : in effect permitted even to the *Jew*, under a very light penalty ; but where there was a possibility either of cruelty or abuse,

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there it was more strictly prohibited ; and for this reason, when a creature was torn by a beast, there the flesh, was not to be touched by any human creature, but thrown to the dogs, as you may read in the 22d chapter of *Exodus*, at the 31st verse : and the reason of this distinction is obvious ; if men were permitted to make any advantage of creatures torn to death by beasts, what an inlet into all manner of cruelty, (as well as villainy) might such a permission be ! And who can say where it would end ? Nay, who knows, how far such dilacerations might even be counterfeited, to the purposes of idolatry, or indulgence in blood ?

BUT however, as there might be cases, clear of all suspicion of cruelty or ill conduct in the owner, and wherein it might be thought hard, absolutely to preclude men by a severe penalty, from making any use of creatures so slain, (as when one ox gored another to death) the penalty upon eating that which was torn, and that which died of it self, was, we find, the same.

IN the case of a creature that died of it self, a heathen might eat so much of the dead carcass, as his natural abhorrence of such food would permit, or his necessities would urge him to. (I mean, if thus much

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much be necessarily implied in the permission to the *Jews*, of selling their *Morticinia* to the heathen). It is true, the *Jew* might not do even this, without a penalty : but it was only the slight penalty of *washing his cloaths, and bathing in water; and being unclean till the evening.* And the reason of the distinction is added ; *because they were a holy people ;* a people peculiarly devoted to God : And, I hope, *Christians* will believe that this reason should equally affect them ; since we are assured by *St. Paul*, in the 2d chapter of his epistle to *Titus*, verse 14. that *Christ Jesus gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity; and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

AND it is certain, that the primitive *Christians* thought themselves as much obliged to abstain from such food, as ever the *Jews* were.

AGAIN, I must beseech all *Christians*, seriously to attend to the tenor of the words, by which abstinence from blood and things strangled is enjoined ; *It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, (say the apostles) to lay upon you no greater burden then these necessary things : that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and*

Blood and things strangled prohibited under the denomination of necessary things.

from

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from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication : If these abstinences were only intended to be enjoined for a season, could they properly be enjoined under the denomination of *necessary things* ? Is that the proper appellation, for duties of a transient, temporary observance ? Did neither the apostles, nor the Holy Ghost, know the distinction, between necessary and expedient ? Or suppose it not convenient to make that distinction at that time ; how come things of a temporary, and things of an eternal obligation, placed upon the same foot of necessity, in the same decree ? Or were fornication, and idol pollutions, only to be abstained from for a time ? And in compliment to the infirmity of the *Jews* ? What monstrous absurdities are these ? And what a train of them, are they obliged to maintain, who assert this decree to be only of temporary obligation ?

BUT to proceed, if this was only a temporary necessity, How long did this necessity last ?

TO this one * answers, that it lasted till the *Jews* and *Gentiles* were formed into one communion : another † says, that it lasted

* Dr. *Hammond*, annot. on the 15th. ch. of the Acts, p. 399.

† St. *Augustine*, *ibid.*

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till the time that no carnal *Israelite* appeared in the church of the *Gentiles*; and again, that it lasted till the temple and the *Jewish* polity were destroyed.

To all this I answer, That if the two first opinions are admitted, then, the necessity of observing the apostolick decree, continues to this day; first, because the *Jews* and *Gentiles* are indisputably not yet fully formed into one communion: and secondly, because there was never any time, wherein there was not some carnal *Israelite* in the church; and I think it must be notorious to many of my readers, that there are some such, even in this part of the *Christian* church, at this day; and so doubtless in every *Christian* church over the face of the whole earth; and therefore both these opinions are wild, and unsupported.

As to the third opinion, *viz.* that the necessity of observing this decree lasted only till the destruction of the *Jewish* temple and polity; To this I answer, That whatever may be thought of the necessity of this decree, it is evident, that the wisdom of it, and the advantage of that abstinence which was due to it, extended much farther. Since without this, that calumny imputed to *Christians*, of killing infants in their assemblies, and drinking their blood, could never be so easily

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easily and so effectually confuted: for nothing could do this so thoroughly, as demonstrating that it was a fundamental principle with *Christians*, to touch no blood of any kind: and what could demonstrate this so effectually, as dying in attestation to the truth of it? as it is notorious, both from the apologists and ecclesiastical historians, that many *Christian* martyrs did.

BUT besides all this, supposing, (not granting) that this were a mere temporary necessity, will any man pretend to say, that it hath ceased? Or that it can cease, as long as there are *Jews* and *Mahometans* in the world, to be converted to the *Christian* religion?

BUT it is farther urged, that this apostolick decree was only given to the *Jewish* proselytes; and consequently, that the necessity of abstaining from blood and things strangled, related to them only: This, they tell us, appears * *in that the apostle, when he preached in any city, did it as yet in the synagogues of the Jews, whither the Gentiles could not come, unless they were proselytes of the gate.*

* *Hammond, ibid.*

Now this opinion, I think, will be sufficiently confuted, by demonstrating these two things: First, that before the passing of this decree, St. *Paul* preached *Christianity* to the whole body of the *Gentiles*, at *Antioch*; and secondly, that this decree is directed to the *Gentiles* at large, and not to the *Jewish* profelytes.

FIRST, I say, St. *Paul* preached the *Christian* religion to the whole body of the *Gentiles* at *Antioch*; this appears clearly and incontestably from the 13th chapter of the *Acts*, at the 42d and following verses, where we are told, that when St. *Paul* had preached in the synagogues, the *Gentiles*, (probably those who had been his hearers) besought that those words might be preached to them the next sabbath; and the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God; Does any man imagine that all these were *Jewish* profelytes? Or not rather, that the *Jews* themselves were but a handful, compared to the rest of the inhabitants of that great city? Now what the consequence of this mighty concourse was, St. *Luke* (the author of this history) tells us verse 45. *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which*
were

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were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46. THEN Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47. FOR so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48. AND when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord: And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.

49. AND the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

Now this transaction at *Antioch*, happened seven years before the decree against blood and things strangled, was passed by the apostles at *Jerusalem*; Can any man in his senses, doubt, after this, whether the apostles preached to the *Gentiles*, before the passing of that decree; when it appears from the words now recited, that the apostles not only preached to the *Gentiles*, but preached

to them in contradistinction to the *Jews*? And does any man know the *Jews* so little, as to imagine, that when the apostles turned to the *Gentiles*, from them, the *Jews* would after this suffer those apostles to preach to the *Gentiles* in their synagogues? Besides, the text says, that the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region; consequently, the apostles were so far from confining themselves to the *Jewish* synagogue, that they were not confined even to the extent of that ample city; but preached throughout the whole country: This opinion, then, that the apostles preached only to the *Jews* and proselytes, before the passing of this decree against blood, at *Jerusalem*, is demonstrably false: and if they preached to the *Gentiles* at large, to whom else can that decree be directed? It is directed to the *Gentile* converts at large; and who can we imagine those converts were, but those to whom *Christianity* was preached, *i. e.* the *Gentiles* at large?

BUT this is yet further demonstrated, from St. *James's* sentence, in the 15th chapter of the *Acts*, upon which the apostolick decree is founded. His words are these:

19. WHEREFORE *my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.*

20. BUT

20. BUT *that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*

21. FOR *Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues, every sabbath day.*

WHAT then? What if *Moses* had those that preached him in the synagogues every sabbath? Why then, there was no necessity of writing upon these points to any of those who were admitted into the synagogues; because they knew, from the writings of *Moses*, that all these things were, from the foundation of the world, unlawful to the whole race of *Adam*.

MY sentence (says the apostle) *is, that we write to the Gentile converts upon these points; for Moses hath those of old in every city, that preach him, i. e. there is no necessity of writing to any Jewish convert, or to any profelyte, convert to Christianity, to abstain from these things: because all that are admitted into the synagogues, (as the profelytes were) know all these things sufficiently already; and accordingly, upon this sentence of St. James, the decree was founded, and directed; doubtless, from the nature*

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nature of the thing, directed to those whom it was fitting and necessary to inform upon these points ; *i. e.* those who were unacquainted with the writings of *Moses* ; for the decree, as far as it contained a direction to certain duties, could give no information to any others.

AND thus we see, that they who believe this decree given only to the *Jewish* proselytes, proceed upon manifest mistakes ; and therefore we may say of them, as our Saviour said of the *Sadducees*, *They do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures.*

NAY, some of them do err yet more ; affirming that this canon is only an exemption from the observance of the *Jewish* law, but contains no command or precept of abstinence, upon the points there mentioned. But the canon itself will best determine this doubt ; *It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burthen then these necessary things.* Does any man imagine that the words, *no greater burthen*, imply no burthen at all ? Or rather, Don't the words plainly imply, to common sense, that they did lay the load of those necessary things upon them ; but would load them with nothing that was unnecessary ? I own I should be ashamed to mention these objections in a *Christian* country of common

V O L. II. E fense,

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V O L. II. E sense,

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sense, if so learned a man as Dr. *Hammond* * had not seriously urged them, as if he thought them of moment.

AGAIN, an objection is raised against this doctrine from the conclusion of the decree, *ye do well*; insinuating, that tho' they should do well to observe it, yet they did no ill in not observing it.

I ANSWER, That doing well, in the style of scripture, as well as common speech, is acting agreeably to our duty; and doing well in necessary things, must certainly be acting agreeably to necessary duty; and certainly the same duty cannot be at the same time necessary, and indifferent.

BUT it is objected, that if the points contained in this decree are not parts of the *Mosaic* law, the decree has no relation to the question in debate; for the debate was, whether the *Gentile* converts to *Christianity* should be obliged to observe the law of *Moses*?

I ANSWER, That the decree hath the clearest relation to the question; inasmuch as it is a decision, that the *Gentile* converts

* *Hammond, ibid.*

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were not obliged to observe the law of *Moses*; it hath at the same time a plain relation to the point in question; for what could be more proper, than to take that occasion to let the *Gentiles* know, that they were obliged to the observance of such duties as were obligatory antecedent to the law of *Moses*, tho' they were exempted from that law?

AGAIN it is urged, that this decree could only oblige those to whom it was directed, i. e. the *Gentiles* of *Antioch*, and *Syria*, and *Cilicia*.

As if the decree, and the reason of it, did not equally extend to all *Gentile* converts throughout the whole world: And as if this doctrine were only taught and received in those particular regions; when it is evident, beyond a possibility of being denied or doubted, that all *Christians*, in every region of the earth, were taught and actually imbraced the same doctrine, at least for the first three hundred years after *Christ*. * Every one knows that the question

* Except in the instance of a dispensation, said to have been granted by *Eleutherus*, bishop of *Rome*, in the second century, to eat any thing that was man's meat, which yet was soon overruled by the prevalence of the doctrine of abstinence from blood, which became universal in the third century.

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moved and debated in the council of *Jerusalem* respected no particular people or country, but related to the heathen converts to *Christianity* in general; and it is certain, that the determination of that question, was as general as the debate: and the reason of directing the letters which carried this decree to the brethren at *Antioch*, *Syria*, and *Cilicia*, plainly was, because they, and they only, had been disturbed by the doctrine of those judaizing converts, who urged the necessity of observing the whole law of *Moses*, even after conversion to *Christianity*; and there was no necessity that the apostles should write to any other converts on this occasion, but those who had been disturbed by that doctrine; for when they were quieted upon this head, by the unanimous sentence of the apostles, there was no danger that any others should be disquieted by it; or if they were, the same sentence would undoubtedly be equally satisfactory to them also; especially since they could not but see, that tho' the letter from the synod of *Jerusalem*, was directed to the brethren at *Antioch*, yet it was plainly founded upon this principle, that all the converts from Heathenism to Christianity should be exempted from all observance of the law of *Moses*, except in those four instances laid down in that canon; and these, as so many precepts
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of the sons of *Noah* * (as, in truth, they contain all such of them as were not already sufficiently known and admitted by the heathen world), the *Jews* themselves believed to be obligatory upon all mankind, antecedent to the law of *Moses*.

ADD to all this, that if the reasons of the apostolick decision, and the direction of the letters containing it, were not so clear to us, at this distance, yet nothing were more shocking, or more unchristian, than to suppose, that the precepts of any apostolick epistle are obligatory to those only, to whom that epistle is directed.

BUT it is still objected, that this dispute could not have happened otherwise than between *Gentile* and *Judaizing* converts; and consequently, the decision of it must have respect to the conduct which it was then necessary the *Gentiles* should hold, with regard to the *Jews*, who could not converse with them upon the foot of a friendly communication, could not sit at meat, &c. unless the *Gentiles* abstained from blood, &c.

The main objection to this doctrine considered.

* Whether these precepts were then known by that name, I shall not take upon me to determine; (probably they were not) but that all the sons of *Noah* were obliged to observe them, is, I think, undoubted.

CONSEQUENTLY, that this necessity is now ceased.

IN answer to this, admitting the premises, I must own I cannot see how this conclusion follows from them, as long as there are *Jews* and *Mahometans* in the world to be converted to the *Christian* religion.

BESIDES, whatever the occasion of this decree might be, surely its precepts may be obligatory beyond the occasion: The precepts of our Saviour's sermon upon the mount, were delivered on occasion of his being followed by *great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, &c.* Is the obligation of the precepts there delivered, only relative to the occasion? Had not the apostles found this occasion, of enjoining these precepts of abstinence; is it to be imagin'd they would not have taken some other occasion? Or enjoin'd them without respect to any occasion?

FORNICATION, idolatry, luxury, and cruelty to the creatures, are prohibited by this decree; and an original precept from God to *Noah*, of manifold advantage to mankind, restored; is it to be believed, the apostles could stand in need of a particular occasion to prohibit those enormities? or to restore this blessing!

THE

THE heathen world was over-run with idolatry, * and abandoned with regard to women ; and blood was subservient to both these corruptions : suppose then the duty of abstinence from blood to have ceased with regard to idolatry, must it not still subsist with regard to luxury ? as it is in itself a high inflaming food ; and yet more so, when blended with the flesh, as in things strangled.

FORNICATION did not appear to the heathen world, to be contrary to the law of nature ; (nor do the libertines of the age see it to be so to this day), and as they had no restraints upon intemperance, their luxury of food, greatly contributed to make them abandoned. How then could the apostles, whose business it was to reform the world, pretend to amend mankind, without recovering them from these corruptions ? And what more effectual method could they take to recover them, than a most solemn and sacred injunction of abstinence in those points contained in the decree of *Jerusalem* ? And that the apostles had nothing less than this

* Tho' *Maimonides* only says, that the eating of blood gave occasion to idolatry among the *Zabii*, yet he gives us to understand, that the superstitions of that people filled the whole world. See Sir *John Marsham*, *secul.* 9. p. 195. Lond. edit.

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in view from that decree, is, I think, fairly and fully to be collected from these words of St. *Luke*, *Acts* xvi. 4, 5. *And as they (i. e. Paul and his companions) went thro' the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem, and so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

NOW the decree here referred to, is evidently the decree concerning blood, &c. from the observance of which, the churches were not only increased, by opening the way to a more friendly communication with the *Jews*, and so facilitating their admission into the *Christian* church, but they were likewise *established in the faith*: Does this expression mean nothing! Might we not conclude from it, with some appearance of reason, that the *Christian* religion had been defective without this establishment?

BUT there are yet two other main fundamental objections against this doctrine, taken from the declarations of our Saviour, St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*.

AND the first of them is built upon those words of our blessed Saviour in the 15th chapter of St. *Matthew*, at the 11th verse, *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth*
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the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth. From hence it is inferred, that a man may eat or drink any thing without sin, notwithstanding the apostolick decree.

BUT surely no *Christian* would say this, that saw the absurdities of this assertion; for if this declaration of our Saviour's, destroys the validity of the apostolick decree, then it will follow;

First, THAT this decree was repealed, just twenty years before it was made, which is surely a very extraordinary supposition; for whoever looks into the chronology of his bible, will find, that these words of our Saviour were spoken twenty years before the apostolick council was held at *Jerusalem*.

Secondly, IT will follow, that the whole body of the apostles, did, after full debate, and mature deliberation, make a most solemn decree, in direct contradiction to the plain express declaration of their blessed Lord and Saviour.

AND this supposition is surely as modest, and as *Christian*, as the first was extraordinary; nay more, they made this decree, under the immediate direction and influence of the Spirit of God, and yet made it in direct contradiction to the declaration
of

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of the Son of God. I am really at a loss to think, whether the absurdity, or the blasphemy of these suppositions is most shocking. Let us quit them then, and examine our Saviour's words by the common rules of reason.

AND to clear this point, I lay this down as a plain rule of interpretation, *that general expressions ought not to be extended beyond the reason of them, and the occasion of their being delivered.* For example, St. Paul, in the tenth chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*, answering the arguments of those converts, who pretended they might innocently eat of things offered to idols, even in the idol temples, uses these words, *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient:* Will any man infer from hence, that murder, and adultery, and incest were lawful to St. Paul? Or, that he thought they were? No surely. What then can he mean by them? I answer, That the reason and occasion of them, must determine that question; and do determine the plain sense of those words to be this: All things that are lawful to any other man, are also lawful to me; but every thing that is lawful to be done, is not always expedient: tho' the liberty you took of eating in the idol temple, were lawful, yet if it gives offence, you ought not to take it.

IN the same manner should that general expression of our Saviour's be interpreted ; *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, that defileth the man* : Does any man imagine, that our Saviour meant to give full licence to gluttony and intemperance by this declaration ? Or that a man might deliberately swallow poison by virtue of these words ; or in general, might innocently eat any thing which the law of God at that time forbad to be eaten ? These were strange absurdities to be supposed ; the sense of the declaration then, must be drawn from the reason and occasion of it, which was this : The *Pharisees* were offended with our Saviour's disciples, for sitting down to meat before they washed their hands, contrary to the tradition of the elders ; as if such a violation of a traditional precept, were sin and a pollution : In answer to this, after our Saviour hath shewn the iniquity and absurdity of their traditions, he adds, *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man* ; now the question is, What he meant by those words ; and if he himself had not told us, I really think that the occasion and common sense would teach us to understand no more by them, than this, that it is not any little soil or filth taken into the mouth from eating with unwash'd hands, that

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that can be said to defile a man ; nothing of that kind can properly be called a pollution. This, I say, is the plain, natural, obvious sense of those words : Indeed the latter part of the declaration is not so plain ; *but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth the man* ; this part of it, I say, is not so intelligible ; neither was it so to the disciples, and therefore *Peter* desired his Lord to *declare this parable unto them* ; and accordingly he did so, by shewing, that whatsoever pollution was taken in at the mouth *was cast out into the draught*, but what came out of the mouth, came forth from the heart, as did evil thoughts of all kinds ; and he adds, *These are the things that defile the man ; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man*. Here you see, that our Saviour himself explains his general declaration from the reason and occasion of it, and limits it there ; limits it to eating with unwashen hands ; and surely he will be allowed to understand his own declaration best ; and I should be glad to know, by what authority any man will take upon him, to extend the sense and intention of those words, farther than *Christ* himself extends them ; or, at least, farther than the reason and occasion of them will warrant ? Or where he will stop if he does ? for if we may extend the declaration of *Christ*, so far as to take off our obligation to the observance of one divine law, why not
of

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of any other that will come within the letter of that declaration? (gluttony and intemperance for example), tho' quite beside the intention of it; the intention of it was to take off all apprehension of guilt from violating a tradition of the elders; and shall we extend it to take off all apprehension of guilt from violating a decree inspired by the spirit of God?

BESIDES, we should remember that *Christ* refers to the * *spirit of truth* for many things which he had yet to say to his disciples, which they could not bear: and since this decree was made under the influence of the *spirit of truth*, we may well conclude, that the precepts contained in it, were of that number; and, in all probability, they could not then bear to be told, that the law of *Moses* should be utterly abrogated; except such precepts as were obligatory upon all mankind, antecedent to it.

BUT if this decree is still obligatory, why have we not heard of it sooner?

I ANSWER, That as errors have gradually crept in, they must be gradually removed; and the earliest last; but, I hope, it will be

* John xvi. 12, 13.

allowed,

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allowed, that no antiquity can sanctify error: As this point made no part of the dispute at the reformation, nothing could be determined upon it, in that contest; and no occasion, that I know of, hath since offered to bring it into debate.

I COME now to the last objection of weight, which is this: that the distinction of clean and unclean meats, is plainly taken away in the new testament; and particularly by that voice from heaven in St. *Peter's* vision; and that St. *Paul* clearly determines the lawfulness of eating any thing sold in the shambles, or set before us on the table, *asking no questions for conscience sake.*

TO the first part of this objection, I answer, That the distinction of meats, clean and unclean, commonly supposed to be introduced and established by the law of *Moses*, is plainly taken away, by the voice from heaven, accompanying St. *Peter's* vision: But how does this concession affect the prohibition of blood, established before the law of *Moses*? And which hath nothing to do with the distinction of creatures, clean and unclean, taken away at that time?

BUT to cut this dispute short, I shall only observe, that the very command to St. *Peter* in that vision, is so far from taking away the pro-

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prohibition of blood given to *Noah*, that it clearly establishes it: the words are these; *Rise, Peter, kill, and eat*: now the *Greek* word *θύσον*, which is here translated *kill*, does in the original signify to *sacrifice*, and the plain sense of the command, is this, that *Peter* should slay those creatures, as creatures were wont to be slain for sacrifice; that is, that he should first draw away the blood, and then eat them; and no man that pretends to any knowledge in the *Greek* tongue, will say, that this word has, or can have, any other meaning in this place; and therefore the very command, which takes away the distinction of creatures, clean and unclean, is so far from taking away the prohibition of blood, that it establishes it.

BESIDES, I desire it may be observed, that this command to *St. Peter*, was given in the 41st year from our Saviour's birth; or, in other words, in the year of our Lord 41, and the decree of the apostles at *Jerusalem*, was in the year of our Lord 52. *i. e.* the prohibition of blood was established eleven years after the distinction of meats, clean and unclean was taken away. Ill-fated decree! to be again repealed, so many years before it was made!

As to the latter part of the objection, I own *St. Paul* allows that *Christians* may eat
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whatsoever is sold in the shambles, or set before them at a friend's table, asking no questions for conscience sake; but will any man in his senses, interpret this permission, to extend farther than to things lawful and proper to be sold, or eaten? What shocking absurdities will follow, from such a supposition? Do these people imagine that *St. Paul* meant to license all the barbarities of the *Scythians*, and *Melanchlænians** in the business of food? and yet all this will follow, from these concessions, interpreted in their utmost extent. Can it be believed, with any colour of reason, that *St. Paul* gave this permission in contradiction to the decree of *Jerusalem*? a decree to which he himself consented! nay, which he himself principally occasioned! which he himself actually carried about, and deposited with the several churches! What absurdity and contradiction of conduct, would these men brand the apostle with? to go himself, and with his own hands, to deposit the apostolick decree in one church, under the sanction of a canon ratified by the spirit of God; and then go immediately to another church, and preach against that very canon, and decry it as inconsistent with *Christian liberty*: was this the way to establish *Christianity* in the world, by contradictory and in-

* The *Melanchlænians* fed upon human flesh. Vide *Herodotus*, l. 4.

consistent

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consistent doctrines ! It seems likewise, that his preaching was in this point, (if he did preach) as vain, as it was inconsistent ; for we do not hear of one convert to blood, made either by his sermons or epistles, for the first 300 years of the *Christian* æra.

BUT after all, these vaunted permissions of the apostle, will, upon enquiry, be found to have no relation either to blood, or things strangled ; but to relate entirely to meats offered to idols ; parts of which, were sometimes sold in the shambles, and sometimes eaten in private houses ; and these the apostle permitted to be eaten by *Christians*, asking no questions for conscience sake : and since these permissions no way relate to blood or things strangled, I should be glad to know by what rule of reason, any man can take upon him to apply them to these points, beyond the intention of the apostle, and contrary to every reasonable rule of interpretation ! And whenever any man proves from those concessions, that the apostle meant to give *Christians* a liberty of eating blood and things strangled, I will undertake to prove, by the same way of reasoning, that he intended to give himself a full licence to commit murder and incest.

BUT still it may be urged, that St. Paul undeniably allows *Christians* to eat things

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offered to idols, contrary to the apostolick decree ; and if he invalidates that decree in one instance, Why not in another ?

To this I answer, That the plain intention of the council at *Jerusalem*, in commanding to abstain from meats offered to idols, was to keep *Christians* from idolatry ; or, as St. *James* expresses it, *from pollutions of idols* : and the true way to effect this, they knew, was, by prohibiting all communion with idols and idolaters, in their feasts, instituted in honour of their idols ; and this is plainly what is meant by the command of abstaining from meats offered to idols ; and since those feasts were kept in the idol temples, How is this command invalidated by St. *Paul's* permission of eating any part of a creature sold in the shambles, or set before them in private houses, tho' that creature might have been slain in honour to an idol ? Since the *Christian* that eat it in this manner, did not eat it in honour to the idol, nor as meat offered to an idol, but as common food.

To illustrate this by a parallel instance. Suppose the apostolick decree had commanded *Christians* to abstain from *things stolen*, What would any reasonable man understand by that prohibition ? Would he not understand that it was meant to prohibit theft, and all communion with thieves in their villainy ?

Yes

Yes surely: Suppose then any one of the council, should, after this, tell the people he preached to, that they might buy any meat publickly sold in the shambles, or set before them in private houses, *asking no questions for conscience sake*; tho' possibly the butcher, or the host, might have stolen that meat: Would any man in his senses think this permission was intended to annul or invalidate the decree of abstaining from *things stolen*? and if any man think such an interpretation absurd in one case, he must surely think it as absurd in the other; especially since St. Paul himself so expressly, and so solemnly, deters *Christians* from all participation of idolatrous feasts; that is, from all meats offered to idols, as such: for whereas it was pretended by some, that they might innocently partake of idol feasts, since they knew that an *idol was nothing*, and that there was no God but one: he reproves that pretence by that dreadful denunciation in the 10th chapter of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, at the 20th and 21st verses; *But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils; ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils*: And will any man, after this, pretend to say, that St. Paul indulg'd *Christians* in eating meats offered to idols, con-

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trary to the apostolick decree? I will say more, I will venture to affirm, that whoever reads St. *Paul's* first epistle to the *Corinthians*, with attention, will find that the main purpose and tendency of it, is to recommend and establish the several particular duties contained in the apostolick decree at *Jerusalem*. I mean the duties of abstinence from fornication, idol pollutions, and forbidden food; * It is true he does this with great address, with seeming concessions, submission to their wisdom, &c. but still all these have no other view than to win them over to his own opinion to more advantage: that he meant to deter them from fornication and idol pollutions, is out of all doubt: that he meant also to withhold them from luxurious and forbidden foods, is, I think, evident from the following texts: *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them*

* As the reader will see, not only by the whole tenor of the epistle, but by considering, in a more particular manner, the several passages here referred to, viz. ch. iii. 1, 2, 3, 17. ch. v. 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. ch. vi. 9, 12, 13. ch. vii. 31. [ch. viii. entire, and ch. ix. 4, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27. compared with ch. x. beginning at the 5th verse.]

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also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Now the destruction of the *Israelites*, here referred to, was for their intemperate longing for the delicacies of *Egypt*, from which God had precluded them; and the verse that follows, is to the same purpose: *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer:* and the reason why the apostle conveys this doctrine so covertly, and with such caution, was, because the persons to whom he wrote, were yet weak and carnal.

THE main objections to this decree, and its doctrines, are, I think, now removed: but still there are some flighter cavils that deserve to be considered: for instance;

IT is urged, that the word πορνεία (fornication), is wanting in some manuscripts, and that St. *Augustine* tells us, (*contra Faust. l. 32. c. 13.*) that such as abstained from wild fowl, hare, &c. on account of their being killed, without bleeding, were laughed at in his time, it being understood that our Saviour's declaration above-mentioned, licensed all sorts of food.

Objections of less moment considered.

I ANSWER, That were these laughers *angels from heaven*, we were obliged, in this case, to reject them, *Gal. i. 8, 9.*

BESIDES, this objection from St. *Augustine*, and the ridicule of his contemporaries, being professedly founded upon our Saviour's declaration, must manifestly stand, or fall, according to the skill or ignorance with which that declaration is interpreted : and whether such interpreters, as his contemporaries, are more the objects of our admiration, our contempt, or our pity, I leave the reader to judge.

IT were also easy to confront this father, with other declarations of his own, inconsistent with the licence here seemingly allowed, as also with many authorities superior to his own : authorities of all the earlier fathers, of emperors, and of councils ; but as these are easily to be collected from comments, the reader, if he thinks it worth while to search, may find them there.

THE objection from the defectiveness of the text in some manuscripts, Dr. *Gale* hath fully and learnedly confuted : and I shall only add, that these sedulous objectors had been silent upon the point, had they remembered that this decree is founded upon Saint *James's* sentence, where no defect is pretended ; and that the same decree is again recited, (*Acts* xxi. 25.) and by the apostles themselves, without any omission or deficiency,

BUT

BUT still it may be objected, that the prohibition of such minute things as meats-and drinks, are below the majesty of God.

I ANSWER, That it may with as much justice be objected, that anger and abusive appellations are prohibited in the gospel: For are not these, at least, equally beneath the majesty of God? human wisdom may object, whatever insolence and vanity suggest; but these principles will always be ill measures, by which to estimate the wisdom and majesty of God: it is the perfection, and ever will be the glory of the gospel, that it prohibits not only gross and immediate acts of immorality, but even its most distant and unsuspected tendencies.

FOR my own part, I can no more see any absurdity in a subordination of duties in any law, either of God or man, than of magistrates in government. The respect, exacted towards inferior magistrates, adds double dignity and veneration to the characters of those above them: in like manner, the religion with which little things are guarded, adds double sanction to the greater.

AND after all; whoever looks with attention into the ways of nature and providence, and considers to what minute seeds

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little accidents, and seemingly casual and unimportant institutions and instructions, the greatest productions in nature, the greatest revolutions in the affairs of the world, and the greatest characters among mankind, have owed, and still owe, their origine; will neither find it easy, nor prudent, to pronounce what is little or unmomentous, in the appointments and institutions of Almighty God. Give me leave to add, that such sentences will never be the calm decisions of a truly enlarged and enlightened mind.

I AM but too sensible, that a doctrine very different from this prevails at present: it is thought advisable to demolish the outworks of religion, to prevent their being made I know not what, *lodgments for the enemy*. I should imagine that the city of God had no vain works erected about it, at least, none of God's erecting! and these only I contend to preserve; at least, I am sure, if we consider the church of God under another image, which the language of scripture hath made more familiar to us, I mean that of a vineyard, this way of reasoning will ill bear the test; destroying the fences of the vineyard, was never thought the best way to preserve its fruit: may we not with much more justice complain to God, in the words of the *Psalmist*, of the present condition of that vine, which his own right hand hath planted amongst us?

Thou

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Thou madest room for it, and when it had taken root it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it : and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedar trees. She stretched out her branches unto the sea, and her boughs unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedge, that all they that go by, pluck off her grapes ? the wild boar out of the wood doth root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it. Turn thee again, thou God of hosts, look down from heaven : behold and visit this vine.

I AM sensible I have already detained the reader too long upon this subject : I am sure much longer than I could wish ; and yet, before I conclude, I must beg his patience for one observation more, and but one, in relation to the importance of it, *viz.* that it will not be easy to produce one so direct, plain, and authoritative prohibition of all the impiety and immorality forbidden by this decree, from any other part of the new testament besides.

FOR tho' St. Paul expressly prohibits both idolatry and fornication, yet possibly all men may not count his single prohibition, as authoritative, as that of the whole council of the apostles, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost.

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I N this decree, fornication, and idol pollutions, are expressly prohibited ; and luxury of the worst kind, that is, luxury indulged with cruelty, prohibited in its cause : and, I believe no *Christian* will deny that the perfection of the gospel, required, that such immoral and impious practices should be prohibited, under the fullest and firmest sanctions of divine authority : the grosser more expressly and authoritatively ; and all sufficiently.

A summary
peroration.

THUS have I defended a divine revelation and command ; a command of easy, unexpensive observance, preventive of cruelty, luxury, and many other evils ; and conducive to much good ! manifestly contributing to the healthfulness and simplicity, and, in consequence of both these, to the elegance and delicacy of food.

A COMMAND in its nature, negative and absolute, as that of the forbidden fruit.

A COMMAND given by God himself to *Noah*, repeated to *Moses*, and ratified by the apostles of *Jesus Christ* ; given immediately after the flood, when the world, as it were, began anew ; and the only one given on that great occasion : repeated with
awful

awful solemnity, to that people whom God separated from the rest of mankind, to be holy to himself : repeated with dreadful denunciations of divine vengeance, both against the *Jew* and the *Stranger* that should dare to transgress it : and ratified by the most solemn and sacred council, that ever was assembled upon earth ; acting under the immediate influence of the spirit of God ! transmitted from that sacred assembly to the several churches of the neighbouring nations, by the hands of no meaner messengers, than two bishops, and two apostles ; asserted by the best writers and most philosophic spirits of their age, the *Christian* apologists ; and sealed with the blood of the best men, the *Christian* martyrs ! confirmed by the unanimous sentences of fathers, emperors, and councils : and one of these as low as the sixth century. Reverenced (in conformity to the practice and principles even of *Jews* and *Mahometans*) by the whole church of God for the first 300 years after *Christ* ; and by all the churches of the *East* to this day : churches allowed to be more extensive, and not more corrupt, than that which vaunts it self, *catholic*, and *infallible* ; And will any man after this dare to vilify this command ? Will any man in his senses pronounce a precept, so given, so repeated, and so ratified by God himself, unmeaning, and unimportant ? Can we imagine, that it was asserted by the most
learned

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learned men of the early ages of *Christianity*, without knowledge ! Or obeyed by the most holy, even unto death, without conscience ? Or revered by the whole church of God, without reason ? And shall we, after all this, condemn this command ! because light libertines revile, and insolents despise it ? or, at best, because some learned men, have given very weak and ungrounded, very unlearned reasons, for believing it repealed ? reasons which I have now sufficiently refuted and exposed : And shall such reasons, and such authorities weigh against God ! and the inspirations of his holy spirit ? against the apostles and apologists, and martyrs ! and the whole church of God, for the three first and purest ages of the *Christian* æra ! Let others glory in their *Christian* liberty, as they like best : but perhaps, to some of these we may say with St. Paul : *Your glorying is not good : know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ?*

THUS much, at least, we may say with him ; *Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not : and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth : there is room for charity on both sides, but with this advantage to the abstinent, that meat (most certainly) commendeth us not to God : for neither if we eat, are we the better ; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* It is some
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consolation to be on the sure side of duty. Glory who will, in his *Christian* liberty ; *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats* : but then let them not forget what follows, *God shall destroy both it and them.*

IF mine is an error, it must be owned at the same time, that it is an error on the sure side, it is innocent, it is an error infinitely better authorized, and nearer allyed to religion, virtue, and humanity, than its contrary ! for (not to mention the precepts of apostles, the opinions of fathers, and the decrees of councils) If I err, I err with the most men (not heathen) and with the best ! with the whole *Christian* world of the best ages ? and the whole eastern world to this day ? I err, on the side of humanity, and health ; and a religious gratitude to the Author and Giver of life, for every creature slain for my support ! I err, in opposition to a practice manifestly brutal and savage ; a practice which human-nature abhors ; a savage practice ! which over-ran the *West*, together with the *Goths* and *Vandals* ; a practice introduced by *Scythian* barbarity, and established by popery ! established with other works of darkness, in the ages of error and ignorance, and their necessary consequences, immorality and irreligion.

A PRACTICE, which under its only colourable pretence, of asserting *Christian* liberty, can, in the ordinary course of things, neither answer nor propose, any end worth mentioning, but those of sloth, luxury, and cruelty; ends, of all others, least *Christian*!

BUT tho' all this be demonstrably true, yet am I sufficiently sensible, that I have all this time been speaking in a great measure to appetite, which hath no ears; and to prejudice, which hath no eyes: to perverseness, incapable of attention; and to pride, incapable of conviction: and am so far, from being able to bring some men to reason, that I am my self, perhaps, become the object of their pity, for attempting it; that I have been feeding the railery of libertines, and the scoffs of infidels; that even dullness will droll on this occasion, and stupidity break stale jests. Alas! who is so ignorant, as not to know, that the *scorner*, foe to every virtue and excellence in life! must in that very character, be the sworn enemy of every part of religion! of that religion, by which every virtue lives, and is esteemed in the world! Who is so ignorant, as not to know, that this meanest denomination of men, subsists upon earth, like the meanest species of insects: by tiezing and tainting to
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the utmost of their malignant might : and then feeding where they have infected ; but, God be praised, their impotence affects nothing but infirmity ! and the slightest fence is security against them. Some difference, I hope, will be allowed between us, on this occasion : I write, from the dictates of a good conscience ; it is theirs to see, if they reproach not from the influence of an evil : I write from the clearest conviction ; let them beware that they rail not from corruption : this I will say without scruple : I reason from the light of an humble, an honest, and a diligent enquiry : and if they ridicule, they ridicule from the depth of a lazy, and a conceited ignorance ! How far that ignorance will acquit them at the great day of account, God only knows.





DISSERTATION III.

Of the building of Babel.

H E N the world, as it were, began a second time, in *Noah* and his sons, *Moses* tells us, that God blessed them twice, in a very remarkable manner, and in words that plainly imply the blessing of an immense increase. Thus in *Gen. ix. 1.* *And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.* And again at the 7th verse, *And you, Be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.* By these commands in such reiterated and exaggerating expressions, of being fruitful, multiplying, and bringing forth abundantly, is plainly meant, according to the idiom of the *Hebrew* tongue, the blessing of a very extraordinary and prodigious

gious increase, conferred upon *Noah* and his sons: for what God commands, he wills; and what he wills, must have effect. From hence some have inferred, that mankind were multiplied by twins at least, for many years next after the flood; and they are confirmed in this conjecture, by finding, that according to the *Hebrew* chronology of the old testament; they were in about a hundred years from that æra, numerous enough to set about the building of the tower of *Babel*, the most magnificent and stupendous work of all antiquity.

THE number of mankind, supposed by some then in the world, amounts to about a million and a half. But the learned primate *Usher* contents himself with half that number, *viz.* 338000 males, and as many females.

BUT as much the greater part of these must have been children at this time, and many of those, who were sufficient for labour, must be taken up in cultivating the ground, and furnishing provision for those who were employed in building: the remaining hands, are, by some men deemed a number not sufficient to set about, and much less to finish so great a work.

I SHALL not enter into this dispute, but content myself with observing, that there is not the least necessity for confining even the beginning of that great undertaking to this time ; since the only reason of moment assigned for that confinement, is this ; it is said in the 10th chapter of *Genesis*, at the 25th verse, That *unto Eber were born two sons : the name of one was Peleg*, which is derived from a *Hebrew* word signifying to divide ; and the reason of the name is annexed ; *for in his days was the earth divided* : Now, by the subsequent account of *Peleg's* ancestors, we find that he was born in the 101st year after the flood : from whence it is concluded, that the earth began to be divided at his birth. But this conclusion by no means follows from the text, which only says, that *in his days the earth was divided* : words, which can with no propriety or colour of reason, be supposed to imply that this division began at his birth. Nor is it so much as said, that this name was given him at his birth : and it is certain, it might as well have been given him, at any time after, from his being a principal agent among his own family, in the division made in his days : as it is notorious, that names have been given not only to men, but to families, from like accidents, in infinite instances, throughout all ages and regions

regions of the world ; or suppose the name given at his birth, Why might it not have been given prophetically, as that of *Noah*, from an event foreseen, which did not however come to pass till many hundreds of years after the name was given ? And since *Peleg* lived two hundred and thirty-nine years, and that his younger brother *Jocktan*, and his sons, were a considerable colony in the distribution of the world, at that time, it is much more rational, and every way more credible, that this distribution did not begin till a considerable part of his life was lapsed. And if it be supposed begun about a hundred years after his birth, or if his birth be computed according to the chronology of the *Septuagint*, we shall then have time sufficient for finishing the great work of *Babel*, before this distribution ; since mankind, might very well be multiplied to some millions, before that time.

HAVING thus prepared the way, the business of this dissertation shall be to enquire,

First, WHETHER there ever was such a tower built as is here spoken of by *Moses* : and if built, by whom.

Secondly, WHAT end the builders proposed by erecting so magnificent a structure.

Thirdly, WHAT end Almighty God proposed by defeating their project, in the manner here recorded by *Moses*, viz. by confounding their language. And,

Lastly, To answer the objections which have been raised against this account of the confusion of tongues.

IN the first place then, that there was such a tower in *Babylon* is out of all doubt; that it was also built of brick and slime, as the scriptures express, is attested by *Herodotus*, and *Arrian*, who were both upon the spot; the slime being that pitchy substance called *Asphaltus*, with which that country abounds; and the brick, *Herodotus* assures us, *was baked in furnaces*; so perfectly does his testimony agree with *Moses*, who records the purpose of those builders, and their performance of it, in these words; *And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly; and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.* Then follows; *And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.*

THE expression of reaching unto heaven, is used according to the known idiom of the *Hebrew*, and the *Greek* also, to signify very great

great height. And, in fact, the height of this tower, was prodigious, it was an hundred and nineteen feet higher than the highest of the *Egyptian* pyramids; even according to their accounts who rate it lowest. * Now the accounts of the heathen concerning this city, are all either fabulous or contradictory: Some say that *Belus* built it; others *Semiramis*; and we know that *Nebuchadnezzar* took all the glory of it to himself; *Ctesias* (and after him *Diodorus*) ascribes all the buildings of that great city to *Semiramis*; which yet were the known works of many succeeding generations; and which were so prodigious, that it was impossible they could be otherwise executed. But as he is an historian of no credit, and demonstrably and notoriously false in his account of this matter: and as other heathen historians are not so much as agreed who was the founder of the city, (tho' all agree, that this tower was the temple of *Belus*, who is supposed the *Nimrod* of the scripture) some † seeming of opinion, that it

* *Strabo* determines the height of it to be a furlong; and upon this foot, the authors of the universal history compute it to be 179 feet higher than the greatest of the *Egyptian* pyramids.

† *Pliny*, vol. i. p. 356. *Durat adhuc ibi Jovis Beli templum: inventor hic fuit sideralis scientia.* And *Di d. Siculus*, l. i. gives us to understand, that the *Chaldeans* made their astronomical observations there.

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was erected by him for astronomical observations; and others, that it was built a little later, and dedicated to him; it is plain we have no account of this matter to rest upon, with any clearness and confidence, except that of *Moses*; who, as he is doubtless the most antient, is also found, after all possible scrutiny, to be infinitely the most authentick historian, of all antiquity.

AND as this tower of *Babel*, considered upon the foot of the antient chronology, is doubtless the oldest work, of the oldest (at least, one of the oldest) city, of the oldest empire of the world; and confessedly achieved in the beginning of that empire; the question then is, How it could be performed so early, otherwise than in the manner *Moses* relates it? for *Belus* is allowed by most and best heathen writers * to be the founder of the city, as well as the empire; and it never was doubted, that the tower was built by the founder of the empire, when the same person is supposed the founder of the city; and being at the same time allowed the most prodigious work of all antiquity, the question is, How *Belus* could build it? It is not to be imagined, how it could be attempted by any

* See Quint. Curt. l. 5. and Pliny ut supra. Prideaux's connection. Part. 1. l. 2.

prince in the infancy both of empire and arts, in the infancy of empire, when royalty was confined for the most part to the dominion of one or two cities ! as it certainly was, as low as *Abraham* ; and no more than four are attributed even to *Nimrod* in the scripture ; and *Moses's* account of him, is, that *he began to be a mighty one in the earth* : which the best writers explain, by his being the first that laid the foundation of regal authority, among mankind ; and to imagine that such a beginner of sovereign power, could effect such a structure as the tower of *Babel*, is a wild supposition. Nor is it imaginable, how an empire able to effect such a work, could be intirely acquired, and so thoroughly established by the same person, as to allow leisure for amusements of such infinite toil and trouble. It is true, great empires, have since been seemingly acquired, by single persons, as *Cyrus*, and *Alexander* : but there is a great error in this supposition ; they began, upon the foundation of kingdoms already acquired by their ancestors ; and established by the care and wisdom of many successive rulers, for several generations ; and after a long improvement and exercise of their people in arts and arms, which gave them singular advantages over those they conquered : so that tho' these empires rose to their height under *Cyrus* and *Alexander*, yet were they in reality the

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work of many ages. Even *Genghiscan*, and *Tamerlane* the great, set out upon the credit and strength of considerable principalities long in the possession of their ancestors; nor is there any instance (that ever I could learn) of any great empire from the foundation of the world, entirely erected and established by one private person; and therefore there is all the reason in the world to believe, that *Nimrod's* dominion was not very great; or if it were, there is no instance of works of this kind attempted from that day to this, but from the fulness of wealth, and wantonness of power; after peace, luxury, and long leisure, had introduced and established arts; and therefore nothing can be wilder, than to attribute this work to the power and vanity of one man, in the infancy both of arts and empire; and when we can scarce suppose, that there was any such thing as artificial wealth in the world. And since this building, is undoubtedly very antient, nay, demonstrably as antient as the scriptures make it, and yet cannot be supposed the work of any one man in that period, To what can it, with any appearance of probability, be ascribed, but to the united labours of all mankind? And that it was compleated in that union, before the confusion of their language, seems highly probable from these words of *Moses*, in the eighth verse of this chapter, *So the Lord*
scat-

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scattered them abroad from thence, upon the face of all the earth, and they left off to build the city : if the tower had not been finished before this time, their cessation from that also, would naturally have been mentioned ; but vanity being a main motive to this work, as shall be shewn immediately, it is probable, the work of greatest vanity was first begun and executed ; and executed doubtless it might be, by such an immense number of men so united ; but impossible to be executed by the power of any separate society of men, for many ages after the dispersion.

BESIDES, if Sir *Isaac Newton's* correction of antient chronology, be right, neither *Belus*, nor *Ninus*, nor *Semiramis*, the supposed builders of this tower, in the accounts of the heathen, had so much as a being, till many hundreds of years after *Moses's* account of this matter : and yet *Moses* speaks of this tower and city, as of any other affairs well known in his time : Can we then, with any colour of reason, doubt of its existence at that time ? And what end could he have in giving a false, or fictitious account of its origine ? unless to discredit the rest of his writings, and defeat his own purposes, with a people, with whom the tradition of this matter was very fresh ; as it could not but be, in so small a space from the most remarkable event

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event that ever was, since the foundation of the world, except the deluge.

AND therefore take this matter either way ; either upon the foot of the antient chronology, or the correction of it, *Moses's* account is the only one that can be relied on, with any appearance of reason.

I CANNOT in this place forbear taking notice of a passage in *Diodorus Siculus* (l. i.) which gives great confirmation to this part of the *Mosaic* history : he tells us, that on the walls of one of the *Babylonian* palaces, was pourtrayed, a general hunting, of all sorts of wild beasts : with the figure of a woman on horseback, piercing a leopard, and a man fighting with a lyon ; supposed to represent *Semiramis* and *Ninus* ; and on the walls of the other palace, armies in battalia, and huntings of several kinds. Now *Moses*, when he hath told us, that *Nimrod* began to be a mighty one on the earth, he adds, that he was a mighty hunter before the Lord, i. e. according to the *Hebrew* idiom, he was a very great and remarkable huntsman ; so remarkable, that it became a common saying in the world, *Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord*. Now, as hunting is the best means of training up men to war, and was the most natural means of attaining to empire, in those early ages,
by

by the glory gained, and publick good done, in destroying those wild beasts which infested the world at that time: and also by drawing together a body of men under one leader; and as boars and lions are still carried in the escutcheons of great families, in memory of some exploits atchieved by their ancestors, on such creatures, as Mr. *Selden* observes; and since *Moses* tells us, not only that *Nimrod* was a mighty huntsman, but likewise, that *Babel* was the beginning of his kingdom: What can be so rational an account of these ornaments on the *Babylonian* palaces, as that they were set up by some of *Nimrod's* descendants, in their ancestor's imperial city, in memory of the great founder of their family, and the empire?

AND thus having cleared the first head of my enquiry, *viz.* Whether there ever was such a tower as that mentioned in my text, and who were the builders of it; I now proceed, in the second place, to enquire what end these builders proposed by erecting so magnificent a structure.

AND that, I think, is sufficiently explained to us, *Gen. xi. 4.* *And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest, (or as the LXX render it, before)*

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before) we be scattered abroad, upon the face of the whole earth.

Now in this resolution two ends seem plainly to be aimed at; to prevent a dispersion, and to make a name: let us consider each of these distinctly,

FIRST then, we are to enquire, how they could propose to prevent a dispersion, by building this tower: and this, I think, is obvious; they were now in the midst of a vast plain, undistinguished by roads, buildings, or boundaries of any kind, except rivers. The provision of pasture, and other necessities obliged them to separate; and when they were separated, there was a necessity of some guidance, to bring them together again, on occasion: otherwise, all regular and easy communication must be cut off; and with that, all the pleasures of society. Now what could so naturally and properly prevent all these inconveniencies, as a tower large and lofty enough to be seen at great distances; and consequently, sufficient to guide them from all quarters of that immense region! and when they had occasion to correspond, or come together, nothing was more proper, than the contiguous buildings of a city, for their reception, and more convenient communication,

BEFORE

BEFORE their descent, *Ararat*, and the ark upon it, were land-marks sufficient: and nothing could so effectually supply their place, upon a vast plain, as an ample tower of sufficient eminence: and this was so just and judicious a reason for erecting this tower, that *Perizonius*, a late learned writer, thought it the only one implied in the text, and hath with a good deal of learning (and not without some probability) endeavoured to shew, that the words, *Let us make us a name*, might in the original, signify no more, than let us make us a *Sign*, that is, a land-mark or monument to guide us.

BUT forasmuch as those words, would then be unnecessary, a monument or land-mark, being sufficiently implied in the idea of a *tower, whose top may reach unto heaven*: and as the LXX have rendered them otherwise, to imply a motive of fame or vanity, and both these reasons are very natural, and very well consistent: therefore I chuse to understand the words in the common received sense. Take this resolution then, in the light of both these motives united, and the reasoning of these bold builders will stand thus:

WE are here on a vast plain, our dispersion is inevitable, our increase and the necessities

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cessities of life demand it, we are strong and happy united : divided, we shall be weak and wretched : let us then contrive some means of union, and friendly communication ; (which may at the same time perpetuate our fame and memory) and what means so proper for these purposes, as a magnificent city, and a mighty tower *whose top may reach unto heaven !* This city, and this tower, will be sure means of union, and friendly communication, the tower will be a land-mark to us, throughout the whole extent of this vast plain ; * and so make our correspondence easy, as the city will make it commodious. These glorious purposes, we are well able to effect united ; but divided, we shall be inconsiderable ; and

* As to the extent of this plain, the reader will, I hope, not be displeased at my transcribing a paragraph upon this head from the learned authors of the universal history before-mentioned, (N. 2. p. 142.)

“ We meet with footsteps of the name of *Shinaar*, in those parts, both in ancient and modern authors ; *Sennaar* of *Babylon*, is mentioned by *Hestius* the *Milesian*, and the city of *Singara* in *Mesopotamia* by several. Some speak of a territory of that name in the same quarters ; *Ptolemy* places both the city and mountain of *Singara* there ; all which seem to be the same city, mountain and territory, which still bear the name of *Sanjâr* in the east. The part of *Mesopotamia*, chosen out by the astronomers in the time of *Khalifah al Mamûn*, for measuring the content of a degree of a great circle, was the desert of *Senjâr* ; which the nature of that experiment shews to have been large, as well as a level country ; and this we take to have been, at least, a part of the ancient plain of *Shinaar*. ”

disperse

disperse inglorious, and estranged, over the face of the earth.

COMMENTATORS have puzzled themselves to find out forced reasons for this union of mankind in so extraordinary an undertaking ; when the plain natural reasons of it, lay so fully and fairly before them in the text.

THEY were all the sons of one man, bred up in brotherly affection, and under all the motives of friendly union, that can be imagined ; their common father, was their common governor : they were the only men on the globe ; and they had no property to contend for. What would not such friends so united undertake ! What attempt could be too arduous, or too discouraging, to continue, and, if possible, to perpetuate such a union !

BUT besides all this, all the pride and magnificence of their ancestors, were defaced, and utterly destroyed by the deluge, without the least remains or memorial of their grandeur ! consequently, the earth was now a clear stage, whereon to erect new, and unrivalled monuments of glory and grandeur to themselves : nor could they want art to effect their purpose ; it being in itself

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a work of the utmost plainness and simplicity, which required little art or contrivance; or if it had, *Noah* knew, at least, an hundred and twenty years before-hand, that the earth was to be destroyed, and peopled again from him; he knew, that he, and his sons, would want houses after the flood; and therefore, he must be very negligent, (to say no worse) if he did not acquire some knowledge and skill in building: and take care also that his sons should be instructed in architecture. And they had all the inventions and improvements of their ancestors for their guides and models. And being assured by God himself, that the world should be destroyed no more, in the same manner, they had reason to believe, that whatever monuments of magnificence they should now erect, would last in proportion to the strength of the structure, and durableness of the materials. As to the first, I believe it will be allowed, that no other structure ever vied with this in point of strength, (except the pyramids) and whether it was through necessity or choice, is hard to say, but certainly they chose the most durable materials for their structure, that this world affords; since right good brick clay, thoroughly burnt, and such was that of which this building wholly consisted, is found to outlast marble; and

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and is, I believe, more durable even than metals of any kind. *

N O R let an man think it strange that I lay so great a stress upon the motive of vanity, towards effecting this work, when it is notorious, that this is the very principle, which hath ever governed, and incited the whole race of mankind, in all the works and monuments of magnificence, that ever were erected, from the foundation of the world, to this day : that which could erect so many cities, mausoleums, palaces, pillars, and pyramids, may well be allowed sufficient for one *Babel*.

B U T here I would have the reader cautioned, not to imagine that I think this tower and city could be for ever the means of an immediate union and communication among this people, and their posterity, or that they thought it could : the constant increase of their numbers, would perpetually demand a proportionable dispersion, till the whole earth was overspread by them ; and consequently, there would soon be a necessity of

* *Dio* observes (l. 68. p. 783. edit. Leuencl.) that the *asphaltus*, with which *Babylon* was built, gives such a firmness and security (*ασφάλειαν*) to burnt brick, or small stones, that it makes them stronger than either rocks, or iron. And *Diodorus Siculus* (l. 19.) ascribes the duration of embalmed bodies to the mixture of this drug.

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building other cities ; but still this generation would enjoy the immediate benefit of this great undertaking ; which, in all probability, was all they propos'd by it, besides the business of vanity before-mentioned.

THESE are the plain obvious reasons for which mankind united in this mighty work of *Babel* : as is sufficiently evident, both from the words of *Moses*, and the nature of the thing ; and I am persuaded, thinking men would never have sought for any other reason, could they have conceived why God should interpose in so extraordinary a manner, to defeat this design ; which they think he would not have done, if the design had not been some way or other, monstrously wicked and detestable ; and indeed this seems to have been the common sense of mankind, upon the point, from the heathen mythology, of the impious attempt of the old giants to invade heaven, by heaping *Pelion* upon *Ossa* ; which is, in all appearance, a fable, founded upon some obscure memory of the design here mentioned by *Moses*, to build a tower whose top may reach unto heaven ; especially considering, that this structure, as *Herodotus* describes it, consisted of eight towers, piled one upon another.

AND therefore I now proceed, in the third place, to enquire, what end Almighty God propos'd,

propos'd, by defeating this project, in the manner here recorded by *Moses*, viz. by confounding their language.

AND the main purpose of God, in confounding the language of mankind, at that time, most probably was, to prevent the early establishment of one great empire in the world ; and, in consequence of that, the proportionable growth of every vice and impiety, among mankind.

FOR, if this city were once finish'd, the immediate consequence would have been, the establishment of some civil government ; and, as the people were all the sons of one man, that government in the hand of *Noah*, or his heir, would have established this city the metropolis of an empire over all mankind, then in being ; and that empire, would naturally, and almost necessarily, become universal, when the ties of regal authority were superadded to the paternal ; and, when all the subordinate degrees, of rulers and magistrates, of all kinds, were in the same analogy : that is, when their power, in the state, should be in the order of their natural authority, as, in all probability, it would be, for some ages, at least. And what would have been the consequence of such an establishment ? Why, plainly this, that impiety,

piety, and immorality of all kinds, would have kept pace with the empire ; and increased and enlarged in the same proportion ; since it is notorious, that the wickedness of men, in all societies, is, in proportion to their number. Increase of men exacts an increase of industry ; industry brings wealth ; wealth, luxury ; and luxury, vice of every kind. This is the known and ordinary train of things. Hence it is, that the greatest cities, being most wealthy, are found, in fact, to be most luxurious, and most vicious ; and, in proportion to the duration of that affluence, and the numbers of men, infected by it, the arts of luxury, and all the consequent corruptions, must eternally endure and increase also ; and, as an empire, founded at this time, must, from the nature of the thing, become more extensive than any other ever was, at least, since the flood, because all the members of it must be joined together, by the cement of one common blood, and by all the ties of the same language, manners, religion, interest, and authority ; consequently, the corruptions of mankind, would, of necessity, increase, and extend, in the same proportion ; and as such an empire, must, in all probability, soon stretch itself to the utmost limits of the earth, and so become universal, wicked-

wickedness would undoubtedly be as universal. *

THIS God Almighty plainly foresaw ; and, by one act of infinite and adorable wisdom, prevented ; prevented, not only for the present, but, to the end of the world ; by that single act, of confounding their language, he crumbled mankind, at once, into separate affections and interests ; and reduced them to the virtue and the discipline of small societies ; which can subsist no otherwise, in the neighbourhood of other societies, of separate interests, but by discipline, and virtue, and industry ; and, as the variety of languages, now diffused among mankind, would naturally increase, from the mixtures, arising from the commerce of one people with several others, of different tongues : and different languages, will always create a difference of inclinations, and, in consequence of that, a difference of interests, it is evident, that the disunion of mankind, must, from this one principle, eternally increase with their numbers ; and, by this means, universal monarchy, and the consequence of that, universal corruption, must for ever be kept out of the world.

* There seems to have been, at least, two empires subsisting in the world at once, before the flood : nor did wickedness become universal, till the families of *Seth* and *Cain* united.

AND that this was the exprefs purpose of providence, in confounding the language of the world, at this time, feems to me clear, from God's own words, (recorded by *Moses*) on this occafion, in the 11th chapter of *Gen.* at the 6th and 7th verfes, *And the Lord faid, Behold, the people is one; and they have all one language: And this they begin to do: And now nothing will be reſtrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*

THE *people is one* (faith God); one in ſuch a ſenſe, as no other people ever were, from that day, to this: All brethren, the children of one father, then alive, and, in all probability, at their head; and, being thus united by blood, *they have alſo all one language*; cemented by every principle of union that can be imagined; *and this they begin to do*; or, as it is in the original, *this is their beginning to do, and now nothing will be reſtrained from them, which they have imagined to do: i. e.* this is their firſt attempt, and, if they ſucceed in this, the ſame brotherly affection, and ſocial vanity, which united them in this attempt, and made it prosperous, will inſpire them with a ſtrong deſire of attempting, and a proud confidence of effecting, every wiſh, and every vanity, that comes into their hearts; the conſequence of which, muſt be, that they will run into all manner of

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of irregularity, and extravagance ; to prevent which, God immediately enters into this resolution : *Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech : So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence* (says *Moses*) *upon the face of all the earth ; and they left off to build the city.* And by what means he did this, is more fully explained in the following verse. *Therefore is the name of it called Babel, (i. e. confusion) because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth : And from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth ; i. e.* having, by the confusion of their language, divided them into distinct tribes, the consequence was, that each of those tribes chose to live separate ; as it is the nature of mankind to separate from those with whom they cannot converse, and to unite where they can. And so they became so many distinct nations, and colonies, over the face of the whole earth.

WHAT the number of these colonies was, is not so clear from the Scriptures ; tho' (with some reason) supposed 70 or 72 ; but, it seems sufficiently evident, that God Almighty so far consulted their happiness, as to unite particular families, by one tongue, and probably, under one head, from those words of *Moses*, in the 10th chapter of *Gen.*

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where, recounting the descendants from each of Noah's sons, he says first, of the descendants of Japheth, *By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided, in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.* And so likewise of the sons of Ham, *These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.* And, in the same manner, he says of the descendants of Shem, *These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.* From whence it seems evident, that a certain number of families, having one tongue, possessed themselves of one country; and so became one nation.

AND thus having, I hope, sufficiently explained for what reason, and with what infinite wisdom the dispersion of mankind was effected, by the single act of confounding their language; having shewn also that it was not in punishment of guilt, but in prevention of it; not to correct corruption, but to keep it out, and to preclude it from a possibility of becoming universal in the world: and that in fact he hath done so: The common opinion of divines, that this was only the work of Ham, and his descendants, is plainly without foundation; Besides the Scripture assures us, that *Asber*, a descendant of Shem's went out from that very land, and
built

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built *Ninive* ; and therefore there is no doubt, but that he, and all his descendants, were there also.

I COME now, in the last place, to answer the only objection, of any moment, which lies against this account, which is this ;

THAT the increase of mankind, must of necessity cause a variety in their language ; and, consequently, that there was no need of a miraculous interposition, to produce this variety.

I N answer to this, I could wish these objectors would support their objection with some more colour of reason, or shew of proof ; because until they do so, the absurdity of the position itself, can only be confuted and exposed ; whereas, since absurd positions can only be supported by weak and idle reasons, if the reason of an absurd opinion were added, the falshood of it would be capable of clearer, and more complicated confutation.

IT is true, a late ingenious writer hath, in his letter to Dr. *Waterland*, in some measure removed this difficulty, by telling us, (p.38.) that the cause of the variety of languages in the world is *grounded in reason and nature ; in the necessary mutability of human things, the rise and fall of states and empires, change*
of

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of modes and customs, which necessarily introduce a proportionable change in language.

NOW, in answer to the main of this objection, I beg leave to ask this gentleman, for whose learning and abilities I have long had an high esteem, (with much grief to see them degraded in defence of an ill cause) this plain question, Whether he believes, that, if the *Normans* and *South-Britons* had spoke the same language at the time of the conquest, the importation of *French* fashions and laws, would have changed the *English* tongue, so far as to make it a new language? I will answer for him that he will not, upon due deliberation, believe so great an absurdity; and, for the rest of his reasoning, upon this subject, refer my reader to the very learned remarks upon this letter, by *Philobiblicus Cantabrigiensis*, which, I doubt not, will give him the same entire satisfaction, upon this point, which, I here acknowledge, that it hath given me.

I N the mean time, I appeal, to every man of common sense, whether any thing in nature be more credible or reasonable, than to believe that any number of men, descending from one father and mother, speaking one language, and teaching the same to their children, would for ever continue to speak that language, and no other; the same reason
son

son why *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japheth*, would speak one language, *viz.* because they were taught it by their parents, would surely hold as good, why their children, should speak it, and their children's children, and so on, endlessly.

THERE are now, some millions of men, in *England*, that speak the same language, because they were taught it; might not as many more, or ten times as many more, or ten thousand times as many more, speak it, for the same reason? It is true, the *English*, and all living languages, are in a perpetual flux; new words are added, and others die, or grow obsolete; But whence does this arise? not at all from the *necessary mutability of human things*; but most evidently from the mixture of other tongues; scholars add new words, or terminations, from the learned languages, either thro' affectation of learning, or a desire of adorning their native tongue, with some words of more elegance or significance; and others from a commerce with countries of different languages, naturally adopt some of their phrases and expressions, into their own; and so our language varies; And what then? How does this affect the question concerning the continuance of the same language, where no other was ever taught, or heard?

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THE *Jews* are allowed to have spoken the same language from *Moses*, to the *Babylonish* captivity ; if their polity had continued, Would they not speak the same language to this day ? Some of the inland inhabitants of *Africa*, are found to speak the same language now, which they spoke 2000 years ago ; (and, in all probability, the same observation is true of our near neighbours the *Welsh*) Could they keep to one language for 2000 years, and could not the descendants of *Noah* keep to one language for 200 ? Could they keep their language amidst a variety of so many others all about them, and when it is scarcely possible they should be clear of all commerce with people of different tongues, and could not these keep their language, when it was impossible they could have any commerce but with one another ? These *Africans* (to say nothing of the *Welsh*) now keep their own tongue, tho' there are so many others in the world, to taint, and by degrees abolish it ; if there were no other language in the world, but theirs, does any man believe they would not continue to speak it for 2000, or 10000 years more, if the world lasted so long ? And if all the rest of mankind were destroyed, and no traces of their learning or languages left behind, and the world were to be wholly peopled from these *Africans*, would not the whole world then

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then speak one language? It is true, as arts increased, and customs changed, new terms and phrases must be added; What then? new words would increase, and adorn the tongue, but sure no man will say, they would destroy it! unless it be believed that new branches, or fruit, or flowers, do daily destroy the tree they shoot out from.

THE learned author of the letter to Dr. *Waterland*, p. 39. seems to think, that all other languages sprang as naturally from the Hebrew, as many shoots from the same root, many branches from the same stock: but I am confident, that whoever carefully considers the genius of each of the antient languages, now extant, will find as little reason to believe that they all had their origin from the Hebrew, as that all the variety of forest and fruit trees in the world, were originally but so many shoots and branches from the palm-tree of *Judæa*. *

BESIDES all this, if we consider that the language of *Adam* (if we could suppose it

* For example; when *Jacob* and *Laban* entered into covenant, and witnessed it by a heap of stones, *Laban* called it *Jegar-sahadutha*, in the *Chaldee*, and *Jacob* called it *Galeed*, in the *Hebrew*; both signifying the same thing: Could *Jegar-sahadutha* naturally spring from *Galeed*, as a root? It is true, these languages are now found to have great affinity; doubtless from a long commerce and intercourse betwixt those nations: but is it any way credible, that they had this affinity in the age of *Jacob*? at least, that they were originally one?

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imperfect in him, when it was demonstrably inspired by God, yet) had time enough to arrive to full perfection in 1656 years: and that *Noah* and his sons, had time enough to learn it in perfection, before the flood; the youngest of his sons, being about an hundred years old, at that time, and himself six hundred: we cannot, with any colour of reason, imagine, that there could be any necessity of adding so much as one word to it, before the building of *Babel*. So utterly groundless and unreasonable is this mighty objection.

AND yet, such is the delusion of human vanity, that rather than acquiesce in the clear and natural account of this matter, delivered by *Moses*, they will have words to wear out with usage like cloaths; forgetting that this can only be in the ordinary train of things, from the importation of other words from foreign and more fashionable languages; otherwise, long usage is so far from tending to abolish, that it naturally tends to establish and preserve a tongue. Nay some have gone so far into folly, as to imagine there was something in the very air, which created a variety in the human speech; and they ground this conjecture upon the different way of pronouncing the same letters in some southern and northern nations; as if this arose from the difference of climates; where-
as,

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. III

as, it is plainly a necessary consequence from the variety of language, that the same letter may, or rather must, have different powers in different languages, *e. g.* we call the first letter of our alphabet, *a*, the *French* call it, *aw*, does that arise from the difference of our air? It is said there is no such letter as a *v consonant* in the native tongue of a neighbouring kingdom, and for that reason the natives, who are early taught their own language, find a difficulty to pronounce this letter in ours (as they certainly do); Will any man of common sense say there is any thing in the air of *Ireland*, that makes it impossible to pronounce a *v consonant*? What an extreme of ignorance and folly is it, to object and argue at this rate?

BEFORE I conclude, it will be proper to observe to the reader, that all the remains now extant of the most antient heathen historians (except *Sanhoniatho*) concur to confirm the *Mosaic* account of this matter: the sum of their testimonies is this, that a huge tower was built by gigantick men at *Babylon*, that there was then but one language among mankind, that the attempt was offensive to the gods, who demolished the tower, overwhelmed the workmen, divided their language, and dispersed them over the face of the earth. *

* See the testimonies on this head collected by *Joseph. Antiq.* l. 1. c. 4. and *Euseb. prep. Evang.* l. 9. c. 14, 15, 17.

AND

AND thus having shewn, that the tower of *Babel* was, and could only be built, in the manner in which *Moses* relates it ; that vanity and social affections were the motives to it ; and that vanity alone could accomplish it : having also shewn, that the providence of God interposed with infinite wisdom on this occasion, by the confusion of their language ; and by that one act prevented the growth of universal corruption, from that day to this : and lastly, having, I hope, fully confuted the mighty objections of infidelity, to this part of the *Mosaic* history ; I shall beg leave to add one, and but one observation more upon this head, and that is, How injuriously and unreasonably men object to the *Mosaic* account of God's endowing the first man with a perfect knowledge and skill of language at once, when the same miraculous act of power hath since been more than once repeated : and not one language only, but many, infused in an instant ! several languages infused into several men at *Babel*, and many into several men at *Jerusalem*. The first of these facts sufficiently proves itself at this day ; and the second will, I trust in God, be placed out of the reach of all reasonable doubt, when it comes to be considered. I shall only add, that the wiser heathen saw the necessity of ascribing the origine of language to Almighty God.

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God. *Plato* tells us, * that the first names were imposed on things by the gods : and, in truth, without the advantage of language divinely taught or inspired, it is evident that man would be (at least, for a long time) *mutum & turpe pecus*, a dumb and base herd ! would, with regard to their condition here, be no way distinguished (unless, perhaps, to disadvantage) from the meanest order of brutes.

* In *Cratylus*.





DISSERTATION IV.

*Concerning the predictions relating to
Ishmael.*

The
Intro-
duction.



AFTER the destruction of *Babel*, the next remarkable event we meet with in the scripture, is, the calling of *Abraham*; the several manifestations of the divine presence, which God vouchsafed unto him; and the several signal blessings bestowed upon him.

FOR what reasons God called *Abraham* from his own country, is not expressly and formally declared in the scripture; but the event, I think, sufficiently shews, that it was, to preserve true religion in the world by means of him and his posterity. The common, and, I believe, the true opinion is, that the world was by this time grown
greatly

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greatly corrupt; and that God now delivered *Abraham* from that flood of idolatry that overspread it, as he did *Noah*, not long before, from the flood of waters.

THAT God did call *Abraham* from his own country, sufficiently appears from the scriptures; thus *Gen. xii. 1, &c.* Now the Lord had said unto *Abraham*, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So *Abraham* departed, as the text tells us, from *Horan*, where *Terah* last dwelt. That he also first left *Chaldea* by a command from God, appears from *Gen. xv. 7.* I am the Lord that brought thee out of *Ur of the Chaldees*.

THE first part of the blessing here promised to *Abraham*, is, that he should be made a great nation. And the business of this dissertation shall be to enquire how that promise was made good to him in his son *Ismael*.

HAVING, at my first entrance upon this work, determined, neither to incumber the reader with quotations, nor trouble him

I 2

with

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with repetitions of what others had observed upon the same subjects before ; and apprehending, upon my first enquiry, that I should have little new to offer upon the subject of *Ishmael's* strange character, and the predictions relating to him, (at least, much less than upon any of the foregoing subjects) that point having been anticipated, and so amply, and with so much learning discussed by a divine of great note in the last age, * I determined for some time to leave that subject untouched : barely referring my reader to the works of that eminent man ; but finding, upon further consideration, that those works were not in every man's hands, and that the argument was capable of some additional illustration : that this point was a subject of singular curiosity, as well as great importance towards clearing the truth of the *Mosaic* predictions : and that the omission of it might be objected by libertines, and ascribed to a consciousness that the writings of *Moses* could not be justified in that point : I determined in the end, not to let it go untreated ; and therefore, I hope, the learned reader will forgive me, and the unlearned thank me, for laying this matter before him, in the clearest order, and in the fewest words I can.

* Dr. Thomas Jackson of Corpus Christi College, Oxon, whose works were printed, Lond. 1653.

IN the 16th chapter of *Genesis* we find these words pronounced by the angel of the Lord, unto *Hagar* in her distress: *I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbred for multitude. Behold thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man; and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*

AND again, in the 17th chapter, we find this, among other promises of God to *Abraham*, *And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee, behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation:* and soon after this we find, that *Ishmael* was circumcised by his father when he was thirteen years old.

NOW the known style of the old testament requires us to understand, that what is here said of *Ishmael*, was likewise intended to be true of his descendants; in the same manner as what *Jacob* predicts of *Judah*, and his other sons, was to be true of their descendants: was to be the characteristick of several tribes. And indeed some parts of this prediction relating to *Ishmael*, necessarily

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tie us down to this way of thinking, and explaining, *I will multiply him exceedingly*; by *him* in this place, is evidently meant his posterity; for, I believe, no man imagines, that he himself was, or was meant, to be literally multiplied, by virtue of this promise. So likewise in the subsequent promise, *I will make him a great nation*: it is evident, that one man cannot be a nation; and therefore *Ishmael* is throughout this whole prediction the representative of his posterity; and what is declared of him, and promised to him, was intended to be verified of his posterity; and fulfilled in them: for since some parts of this prediction were evidently meant of his posterity, and must of necessity refer to them, and be understood of them, and them only, common sense, and all the rules of rational explication require, that all the rest should be understood (if there be no absurdity in such an interpretation) to have them also in view, tho' more immediately true of their parent.

IN the same manner then should the precedent prediction be likewise understood, as intended to be also true of his posterity: *he will be a wild man*; the word which is translated *wild* in this place, signifies in the original, a *wild ass* (the literal construction of the phrase in *Latin* is, *erit onager homo*), and it is explained in the margin of the bible,
fierce

ferce and cruel, or as a wild afs: now this same *wild man*, who was to be as a *wild afs*, multiplied into a great nation, should seem, as designed by this character, to be multiplied into a great nation of wild men; as a wild afs greatly multiplied, must be multiplied into a great nation of wild asses; for otherwise where is the analogy? at least, if we find that the analogy holds in the descendants, as much as in the parent, I think we have all the reason in the world for understanding the prediction in this sense; and surely there is all the reason in the world to believe, that this character was intended to be true of his posterity; inasmuch as they have been remarkably such, I mean wild men, for many ages; and many of them unquestionably are such to this day: as also, because the subsequent words must necessarily be understood of them (his posterity) *His hand will be against every man's hand, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.* Now it is evident, that one man could not subsist alone, at open enmity with all the world; nor could one man's hand be literally against every man's; and therefore this could only be true, and intended of that nation which was to arise from him; and the sense of it could only be, that this nation should subsist, tho' at enmity with all others: and indeed it is sufficiently strange, that this should be true

of any one nation under heaven; and yet it is indisputably true of the race of *Ishmael*, as shall be seen more fully immediately.

AND *he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*: this, in the immediate literal sense of the words, was verified in *Ishmael's* situation; being encompassed by his near kinsmen, the *Israelites*, the sons of *Abraham* by *Keturah*, the *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Idumæans*; but as all mankind are brethren in a larger sense, and as *Ishmael* was still to subsist, tho' at open enmity with all mankind, I think those words, *he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*, may very well be understood as further intended to signify that the descendants of *Ishmael*, notwithstanding their enmity with mankind, should still subsist in the face of the world; for the words, *all his brethren*, can, in their full import and extent, imply nothing less than all mankind, (at least, I think, the event makes it no way unjust or irrational to understand them so here); and as the *Ishmaelites* have ever subsisted thus, it is also remarkable, that they, and the *Jews* only, have subsisted from the remotest accounts of antiquity; as distinct people from all the rest of mankind, and the undoubted descendants of one man.

AND that it might be clearly and indubitably known whose descendants these were,
to

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 121

to whom this promise was made, and so, certainly known, whether that promise was fulfilled, they (the *Isbmaelites*) have been the most singular distinguished race of mortals, (more distinguished even than the *Jews*, if possible) by every mark both of their father and mother, from that day to this.

ISHMAEL was circumcised at thirteen years of age; so have all his sons, * from him, till the establishment of *Mahometism*; and many of them to this day; tho' some of them circumcise indifferently on any year, from the eighth to the thirteenth; but all professing to derive the practice from their father *Isbmael*. And this surely is a strong attestation of the truth of the *Mosaick* history; that the descendents from *Isaac* and *Isbmael* continued for so many ages, and still continue, to practise the rite of circumcision upon their children, at those different distances from their birth, at which *Moses* informs us it was first practised upon their fathers.

HE was *an archer in the wilderness*: his sons, the *Arabs*, have been the most remarkable archers in the world, and are so to this

* And even his daughters. See Heideg. hist. Patriarch. tom. 2. exercit. 7. sect. 29. p. 241. Reland. de relig. Moham. Ludolf. hist. Æthiop.

day;

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day ; and in the wilderness too, where culture is not known. And tho' travellers sometimes talk of a few straggling *Arabs*, with guns ; *Thevenot*, and other writers, assure us, that the greater part of them are still strangers to fire-arms : * It is true, the *Turks* have forbidden that any should be sold to them ; but their caution should seem to be needless : for tho' these *Arabs* have a great terror of fire-arms, yet it is remarkable that they at the same time abhor the use of them. And as their father *Ishmael* was a stranger to culture, so are these his sons. *Ammianus Marcellinus* observes of them, *Nec eorum quisquam aliquando stivam apprehendit, vel arborem colit, aut arva subigendo quaeritat victum* ; not one of them ever touches a plough, plants a tree, or seeks a sustenance by cultivating the earth. And the latest travellers give the very same accounts of them ; observing at the same time, that there are very fruitful portions of ground scattered thro' their desarts ; and doubtless would be more, if they were cultivated.

ISHMAEL's mother was a concubine, and a hireling ; who had conceived him in

* Those *Arabs* who dwell on the confines of *Syria*, and *Persia*, are reported to carry fire-arms ; and the latter are said to be furnished with them by the *Persians*, the better to enable them to annoy the *Turks*.

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one place, and was perhaps delivered of him, in another, for *Abraham* then dwelt in tents; and was in a sojourning state. And it sufficiently appears from *Moses's* account of him, that he never continued long in one place: the providence of God so ordaining, that thro' famine and other accidents, there was a necessity for him to have an intercourse with several nations. *Ammianus Marcellinus* observes of the *Arabians*, that they had mercenary wives, hired for a time, marrying in one place, bringing forth in another, and educating their children in a third: * nor is this matter much altered, since the admission of divorces: To those that still live in the wilderness, it is in all respects the same.

RAUWOLF says of them, in his travels (part 2. ch. 3. p. 151.), that *they take as many wives as the Turks do: neither do they extol or magnify one before the other, because they come from better parents, being they buy them all from them: and Thevenot* tells us, that when a marriage is made, any near relation, who was not present at it, can dissolve it at pleasure, at any time after, paying back the husband his money, and the camel killed at the wedding. Now a woman purchased at first, and discharged at

* Lib. 14. c. 4.

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pleasure, comes, I think, more properly under the character of a hireling or mercenary concubine, than a wife.

THIS being premised, let us now proceed to consider these strange prophetic characters in their order.

I WILL *multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.*

THAT the *Hagarenes* were descended, and denominated, from *Hagar*, and, that the *Arabs* also, especially the *Scænitæ*, were very numerous, and descended of *Ishmael*, and that the *Saracens* were also from the same stock, and more numerous than either, is not, I believe, denied, or doubted; at least, if it be, I refer the reader, for full satisfaction, upon this head, to the learned *Dr. Jackson*, before-mentioned; to the Writers of the life of *Mahomet*, and to Travelers and Voyages without number. In short, it is a point universally agreed, over the East and South. And this people have this security, for being his genuine off-spring, from whom they derive their descent, that they marry only in their own nation; regarding themselves as the noblest of all mortals, and, consequently, disdaining alliances with all others. Nor is this observation abated by any exception, that I know of.

Antiently,

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 125

Antiently, their alliances were confined to their nearest kindred: And a commerce with any other woman was punished with death. That this part of the prediction then, is sufficiently fulfilled, will not, I think, bear a reasonable doubt. *

AND he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.

To clear the first part of the prediction, in the personal character of *Ishmael*, we find, from the 21st chapter of *Genesis*, that he inhabited the wilderness, and was an archer there. The text tells us, that *God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer; that God was with him*, I think, is evident: For, how otherwise he could subsist in a desert, and in the midst of wild beasts, with no more society than his mother at first, and his wife afterwards, is not easily conceived; and the subsistence of his posterity there, to this

* To say nothing of the accounts of this people left us throughout the scriptures, most writers have observed of the *Arabians*, that they are a very numerous people, and some of their tribes are still found to be very numerous, tho', perhaps, less so since the establishment of polygamy, by the *Mahometan* law. *As many as the sons of SAAD* (one of the families) is a proverb amongst them, whereby to express the highest numbers they can imagine. *Vide Excerpta ex Geogr. Nubiensi, in Collectaneis Gabr. Sionita, &c.*

day,

day, is not matter of less wonder to all that have seen them.

THAT he was a *wild man* (the word implies, free, and savage) his condition of life sufficiently shews: And, that the same character descended to his posterity, is notorious, inasmuch as *wild* is their known character, all over the world. And, indeed, there is no one character, or combination of characters, that can denominate any creature wild, or savage, which is not strictly and eminently theirs.

SOME accounts of them, represent them, before the introduction of *Mahometism*, as little restrained, in the use of females, as the brutal herd; and all agree, in characterizing them free, swift, fierce, and cruel. Many of them live in deserts, to this day, and rove about, like the fiercest beasts of prey, seeking whom they may devour.

NOR is this character true only of such of them as live in the deserts of *Arabia*; it was also eminently true of their descendants, the *Saracens*,* the wildest and the fiercest race of men that ever over-ran the world, and is this day true, not only of all those of them,

* See Oakley's hist. of the *Saracens*.

who dwell in the desarts, but likewise of all those who infest the coasts of *Egypt*, *Afric*, and *Asia*, as all travellers agree. " It is a " demonstrative argument, (saith Dr. *Jackson*, p. 105.) " that their wildness was fore- " told by his Spirit, that only can command " Nature, and prescribe limits to the free " thoughts of man, in that this progeny " (throughout so many hundred generations) " vary no more from their first progenitors " agrest and fierce qualities, than the wild " plants of the forest, never accustomed to " human culture, do from the trees, whence " they are propagate. "

NOR is this wildness confined to the land : They rove all over the southern and eastern seas ; insomuch, that there is scarce one creek, or coast, or island, that is clear of them. *Ammianus Marcellinus* compares them to kites, who souse down upon their prey, with incredible swiftness, and, are gone again, in an instant. Had he considered them in the light, and under the image of rovers, flying about at sea, and preying upon every thing they can lay hold of, the character had been yet more apposite.

AND, as they have thus always preyed upon mankind, the necessary consequence is, that they have always been at enmity with them, making good the next part of the prediction,

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dition, *His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.*

THAT any one nation should be of so singular and perverse a character, as to set themselves in open opposition to the rest of the world, and to live in perpetual, professed enmity with all mankind, is surely the strangest and most astonishing prediction that ever was heard or read of; and yet, that it is, beyond all controversy, true of these *Arabians*, the descendants of *Ishmael*, is notorious to the whole world; but, that they should continue so for four thousand years together, and yet subsist, that whole time, under the united enmity of mankind, makes it yet more singular, and is surely the most amazing completion of a prediction, that can possibly be imagined.

SUPPOSE this character were true, at this instant, of any other nation, that we know of, encompassed by, and accessible to others, how long do we think it would continue so? It is scarce possible to imagine, it would subsist one century, and much less forty. Nor is it possible to imagine, how this nation could subsist in that circumstance, but from the uncontrollable Providence of that great Being, who so solemnly pronounced of *Ishmael*, that *he should dwell in the presence of all his*

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 129

his brethren; * *that tho' he should live in a state of hostility with his brethren, that is (as it seems most probably meant) a state of perpetual enmity with the rest of the world, yet he should subsist perpetually under it, before their faces.*

BUT here it may be objected, that this country was not worth the expence of conquest; and, that it was scarce possible to conquer it, protected as it was, by drought and desarts.

I ANSWER, first, that tho' some part of this country, was not, in itself, worth the expence of conquest, yet surely it was worth the while of any, nay of all the neighbour princes, to preserve themselves, and their subjects, from being made a perpetual prey, to worse than wild beasts, by their utter excision: It was well worth while, to root out this pestilent race, which infested the world; and, it is very well known, that the wealth of one part of the country, would

* There is not the least hint in scripture, nor is there the least reason to believe, that *Ishmael* dwelt in a personal state of hostility with his brethren; nor is it possible to imagine, how he could subsist at war with them all. *Isaac* was, beyond all doubt, in friendship with him; he was not then at war with them all: And therefore all circumstances concur to make us understand this prediction as intended to relate chiefly to his posterity.

more than pay for the conquest of the other.

IN the next place let it be observed, that, tho' the natural difficulties of conquering them from the circumstances of the country, and climate, are very great, yet are they not insurmountable: I believe, it will be allowed, that an army well appointed and provided, may very well be supposed capable of doing, what caravans are now known to do every day; the great difficulties there, are, to be able to travel, and subsist, and be supplied with water; and, if that be once found practicable, as it certainly is, valour and military skill must do the rest: And, in fact, these difficulties were, in a great measure, surmounted by two *Roman* emperors in succession, and yet the *Arabs* were neither extirpated, nor subdued.

THEIR effeminate neighbours, the *Egyptians* and *Assaticks*, they have always insulted,*

* We must here except that period of time in which it pleased God to raise up the inhabitants of *Elam*, and *Media*, to chastize the neighbour nations, and particularly the descendants of *Abraham*, for their sins. There is reason to believe, from the 25th chapter of *Isaiah*, that *Arabia* suffered remarkably in this season of general calamity. It was then, and at other times, distressed, but never enslaved.

and

REVELATION *Examined*, &c. 131

and do so at this day. * *Alexander* and his *Macedonians*, would, in all probability, have put them hard to it: He intended an Expedition against them, (because they only, of all the *Asiatics*, as *Arrian* and *Strabo* tell us, sent him no ambassador, nor made him any submission, either before his successes in the east, or after) but died before he could put it in execution.

WHAT *Alexander* intended, *Antigonus*, the greatest of his successors, attempted; but without success, being repulsed with disgrace, and the loss of above 8000 men. *Diodorus Siculus*, who hath left us a relation of this expedition, gives this account of that people: (L. 19.) He tells us, they live *sub dio*, (in open air) without houses, fruits, culture, or wine, *i. e.* without the use of those things which men forfeit their liberties to preserve; as for them, they were determined to live poor, in order to live free; calling the desert their country, being, as *Diodorus* calls them, (φιλελευθεροὶ διαφερόντως) eminently lovers of liberty; to preserve which, the desert was at once their defence and dwelling.

* The governor of *Grand Cairo* keeps a guard of four thousand horsemen every night, on the side of the city, next the wilderness, to secure it from the incursions of the *Arabs*, besides twenty thousand musqueteers, that keep watch within the city.

ANTIGONUS, enraged with his repulse, makes a second attempt upon them, with a select number of choice men ; under the command of his valiant, and fortunately expeditious son, *Demetrius*, who was, however, glad to compound the matter, and leave the *Arabians*, in freedom, and in peace.

AFTER this, when the *Romans* and *Parthians* were rivals for the empire of the east, they (the *Arabs*) joined or opposed themselves to each, as they thought fit ; not desirable, (as *Ammianus Marcellus* justly observes of them) either under the character of friends or enemies ; and, indeed, their character always was, that, of faithless (at least, fickle) friends, and fierce enemies : repressed, and, in some sort subjected for a season, but never entirely either subdued or tamed ; resembling in this (the only comparison in nature that suits them) the wild ass in the desert, and sent out, by the same hand, free as he, *whose house is (also) the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling ;* alike disdainful of bondage ; *scorning alike the multitude of the city, and the cry of the driver.*

MEN of this character quickly became the proper objects of the *Roman* enmity and ambition, which could bear nothing that was unsubdued, unallied, or independent.

DIO

DIO tells us (*L.* 36.) that the *Romans* invaded them, in defence of *Syria*, then under their protection, and vexed by *Aretas*, King of that part of *Arabia* which was subject to the *Romans*, in his (*Dio's*) time ; (but this was certainly no more than the out-skirts of this country, bordering upon *Syria* and *Mesopotamia*) and that this *Aretas* submitted to *Pompey*, and received a garison ; and *Plutarch* tells us, in the life of *Pompey*, that he (*Pompey*) subdued the *Arabians* who dwelt about mount *Amanus*,* by *Afranius* ; and that, after this, the king of the *Arabians* who dwelt about the castle called *Petra*, and who until now made no account of the *Romans*, submitted himself, by letter, to *Pompey* ; but, that *Pompey* possessed himself of that strong hold, does not appear. *Plutarch* rather inclines us to believe, that he was recalled from thence, by the death of *Mithridates*, before he could make full proof of the sincerity of their king's submission. And this is the more probable, because *Gabinus*, who succeeded soon after to the government of *Syria*, was preparing for an expedition against the *Arabians*, (as *Appian* informs us) but was diverted from his purpose by *Ptolomy's* solicitation to be restored to his kingdom.

* These were a colony of *Arabians* settled in *Mesopotamia*.

THE next news we hear of this people, is, that *Agbarus* (or, as others call him, *Ariamnes*) one of their phylarchs, misled and deluded *Crassus* to his destruction. But, by them, in all probability, were the *Palmyrenians* defended, not long after this, when *Anthony* sent his horse to ravage the city; for they were defended, *Appian* tells us, by their archers, *who excel in that way*; which is the distinguished character of the *Arabians*.

AFTER this, we hear little more of them, (unless that *Chabunæus*, who was deluded by *Ventidius*, was one of their kings, as probably he was) except in that fruitless expedition of *Ælius Largus* into *Arabia Felix*, and the destruction of *Herod* the tetrarch's army, by *Aretas*, (*Joseph. l. 18. c. 7.*) till after the entire establishment of the *Roman* empire.

THE power of the whole world was now united into one empire, and that empire now in the hands of one man, just, wise, merciful: loving all good men, and beloved by them, and by his soldiers remarkably; a stranger to envy, ill-will, and fear of death; in dangers, martial, magnanimous, persevering; in necessary expence, magnificent; and, as far as honesty would admit, ambitious; in the toils of war, indefatigable; in all its arts
and

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and adventures, from experience, intelligent, and, from fortitude and wisdom, fortunate ! equally dear to all the friends of *Rome*, and dreadful to all her enemies ! a *Roman*, who subdued the *German*, and humbled the *Parthian*, and had already reduced one part of *Arabia* into a *Roman* province ! Few that are acquainted with the *Roman* history, will be at a loss to find, that the man here meant is *Trajan*.

IF it were possible that God's promise of subsistence to *Isbmael*, in freedom, tho' in enmity with the rest of the world, could be defeated by human wisdom, or mortal might, now was the time, and this the man.

THE reader will, I am sure forgive me, (I hope, thank me) for transcribing one paragraph from the learned author above-mentioned relating to this point, b. 1. p. 108.

“ THEIR city, (*i. e.* the city of the *Hagarenes* ; *Dio* calls them *Agarenes*), faith
 “ *Dio* (l. 68.) was neither great nor rich ;
 “ yet had it *Zoar's* privilege : he that pre-
 “ served the one from the storms of fire and
 “ brimstone, which devoured far greater
 “ neighbouring cities, did guard the other
 “ against the violence of two most potent
 “ emperors, who had over-ran the mightiest
 “ kingdoms of the earth. The heathen

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“ thought the sun, to whom their city was
 “ consecrated, did protect it. But can they
 “ shew us any prophecy of old given by
 “ *Phœbus* for this people’s good? We can
 “ shew them the express promise of *Abra-*
 “ *ham’s* God, more than two thousand years
 “ before, for making them, and their bre-
 “ thren, a mighty nation. Let the atheist
 “ judge whether their God’s arm was shor-
 “ ten’d, or whether his miracles, which the
 “ scripture tells us, were wrought for the
 “ sons of the free woman, whilst they fol-
 “ lowed their father’s steps, can seem incre-
 “ dible, being compared with the wonderful
 “ deliverance of the *Agarenes*, the sons of
 “ the bond-woman, from *Trajan* and *Seve-*
 “ *rus*, both besieging them in person. The
 “ soil about their city was barren, and when
 “ *Trajan* besieged it, very hot; so that the
 “ violence of the siege could not be long:
 “ these signs the politicians could assign of
 “ *Trajan’s* ill success. But whence was it,
 “ that as oft as the city was assaulted, the
 “ soldiers were annoyed with lightnings,
 “ thunders, whirlwinds and hails? Affrighted
 “ and dazzled with the Apparitions of rain-
 “ bows? Whence was it that flies should
 “ corrupt and spoil their meat whilst they
 “ did eat it? By these, and the like means,
 “ wonderful in the heathens sight, was *Tra-*
 “ *jan* forced to give over the siege, which
 “ he had followed not without danger of his
 “ life,

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 137

“ life, by coming within these *strong archers*
 “ shot, in viewing the city, shortly after
 “ (as if he had fought before with men,
 “ but now against God) falling into a dis-
 “ ease, whereof he died.” *

THE infidel, may perhaps, in the security of his closet, and the fastus of a libertine spirit, think light of *these terrors of the Lord*: but let him remember, that they dismayed men, braver and better than himself! The utmost ambition of modern libertines, is to raise themselves up to the reputation of a *Roman* resolute spirit: but these terrors dismayed *Romans*, *Romans* led by *Trajan*! and raised by success! appalled them, in the highest confidence of conquest, and pride of glory.

LET him remember, that *Dio*, the author of this history, was himself a *Roman*, and a soldier, of singular dignity, governor

* I beg leave to assure the reader on this occasion, that I have, with all the care I could, revolved all the accounts of *Arabia* that came in my way; to see whether the phænomena, and the calamities here mentioned by *Dio*, to have distressed the *Roman* army, are frequent in that region. And that I never have been able to meet with any instance of any one of them, except sometimes storms of wind. If hail, frightful appearances of rainbows, and food infested with flies, were ordinary calamities in this region, all the accounts of the caravans that travel thro' these deserts, would naturally and necessarily be full of them: whereas it is notorious, that the best and most experienced writers, who have left us faithful diaries of these affairs, do not so much as mention any of them. Rain is very rarely seen there; and hail (as far as I could learn) never.

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of several provinces, and an officer of note under *Pertinax* ! allowed by criticks, a man of distinguished judgment and capacity, who related nothing upon common report : and all the transactions of his own times, either from his own knowledge, or the testimony of eye-witnesses, of undoubted credit : and yet he relateth these terrors, without any imputation either of superstition or pusillanimity, upon those who were affected by them ! To all this may be added, that he is a writer who appears to have had a particular veneration for *Trajan* ; and consequently, more likely to conceal, than to relate in a very exact and particular manner, any thing which he thought might justly be disadvantageous to his character. And what shall we think of every little libertine of the age, who shall dare to despise or discredit this writer, the better to despise and discredit *Moses* ? Is it not evident, that every such important mortal, must either think himself much wiser than *Dio*, or much braver than *Trajan*, or both ?

AND who is that mighty mortal, so hardy, and so resolved, as not to be dismayed, to see the elements set in array against him ! to see heaven renew its assaults upon him, in hail, lightning, tempest, and thunder, as often as he renewed his assaults upon the enemy ! And that this was the condition
of

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 139

of the *Romans* on this occasion, *Dio* gives us clearly to understand. Rainbows are usually indications of rain; and rain is found by experience to cool the most scorching portions of the *Arabian* deserts; * but the rain could not abate the violence of this distempered heat, one would think that repeated showers of hail, could not fail to effect it. Storms and tempests are commonly known to beat down, and to destroy flies of all kinds: but here, all the powers of nature, either failed of their effects, or produced their contraries. Hail and storms are repeated, and yet heat and flies prevail; prevail perhaps beyond any thing that ever was before heard of! Here is a problem worthy the depth of infidel wisdom! Believers may satisfy themselves that God acted at this time in favour of *Ishmael*, with the same distinguishing mercy which he promised the other descendants of *Abraham*, *Exod.* xxiii. 27, 28. *I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. And I will send bor-*

* See *Pitt's* account of the religion and manners of the *Mahometans*, p. 159. "We travelled thro' a certain valley, which is called by the name of *Attash el wait*, i. e. the *River of Fire*, the vale being so excessively hot, that the very water in their goat-skins hath sometimes been dried up with the glowing, scorching heat. But we had the happiness to pass thorough it when it rained, so that the fervent heat was much allayed thereby; which the *Haggas* looked on as a great blessing, and did not a little praise God for it."

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nets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, &c.

BELIEVERS, men of narrow intellectuals, may think this extraordinary state of things, this reversed order of causes and effects, *dignus Deo vindice nodus*: whilst men of larger talents give themselves no disquiet about them, or look down indignant upon the stupidity of meaner mortals, without once vouchsafing a solution! Might I be allowed to entreat these men of mighty abilities, to imagine themselves for one moment, questioned by the Almighty, on this occasion, as *Job* was on another, and then think what they have to answer:

HAST thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? By what way is the light parted, which scattereth the east wind upon the earth? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings that they may go, and so unto thee, Here we are!

SOME years after this, *Severus*, a valiant, a hardy, a practised, and a prosperous warrior,

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 141

rior, after a series of immense toil and trouble, and endless conquests, when he had defeated all his competitors, taken *Byzantium* (the strongest city in the then known world) and *Nisibis*, made peace with the *Parthians*, and subdued all the regions around: flushed with prosperity, and inflamed to revenge against the inhabitants of *Atra*,* (or as *Herodian* calls it, *Atræ*) on account of their having aided *Niger* against him: indignant also, that this city (the city of the *Hagarenes*) should alone stand out against him, when every thing else had yielded, marches thither with all his forces, and engines of war; and many of these (the inventions of *Priscus*, the most eminent artist of his age) from *Dio's* account of them, secured from hostile fire; the mightiest, the most stupendous, and most destructive, that ever were devised! besieges it twice successively; and is twice repulsed, with shame, and great slaughter of his forces. Nothing can be more clear and succinct, than Doctor *Jackson's* account of this matter (*ibid.*) from *Dio*. l. 75. and therefore I shall take leave to transcribe it.

“ ABOUT eighty years after, the emperor
“ *Severus*, disdaining (as *Trajan* had done)

* *Herodian* says, that *Barfemius*, king of the *Atreni*, sent some archers to aid *Niger* against *Severus*.

“ that

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“ that these *Hagarenes* should stand out still
 “ against the *Romans*, when all the rest
 “ about them had yielded; being repulsed
 “ with loss of men and munition, made
 “ great preparations for the second assault,
 “ in which (after great loss of his soldiers)
 “ having overthrown part of the city wall,
 “ he caused the retreat to be sounded in
 “ policy, hoping the besieged would come
 “ to intreat for peace and liberty, which he
 “ was not minded to grant, but upon condi-
 “ tion they would bewray the hidden trea-
 “ sure supposed to be consecrated to the
 “ sun. But they continued resolute a whole
 “ day; giving no intimation of any treaty
 “ for peace. The soldiers, in the mean
 “ time, were so discontented, that on the
 “ morrow following, the *Europeans*, before
 “ most resolute, would not enter at the
 “ breach: and the *Syrians*, enforced to un-
 “ dertake the service, had a grievous re-
 “ pulse. So (saith *Dion*) *God delivered the*
 “ *city, recalling the soldiers by Severus, when*
 “ *they might have entered, and restraining*
 “ *Severus the second day by the soldiers back-*
 “ *wardness*. The conquest, after this breach,
 “ was, in martial esteem, so easy, that one
 “ of his captains confidently undertook to
 “ effect it, without the hazard of any other
 “ man’s life besides, so he might have but
 “ 550 *European* soldiers assigned: to which
 “ fair proffer, the emperor (as pettish as
 “ they

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 143

“ they had been peevish) in a distracted
 “ chafe replied ; *But where shall I find so*
 “ *many soldiers ?* and so departed unto Pa-
 “ *lestine.* ”

HERE I must beg leave to observe, that the refusal which Dr. *Jackson* ascribes to the pettishness of the emperor, *Dio* seems rather to ascribe to his loss of authority over his soldiers ; [Περὶ τὴν ἀπειθεῖαν τῶν στρατιωτῶν τῷ τοῦ εἰπῶν] *Speaking with relation to the disobedience of the soldiers* : he, who had before this, openly disgraced, and punished the *Prætorian* bands : putting some to death, and disarming and unhorning all the rest ; and this at a time when they were so powerful, as to set the empire to sale, and depose and elect as they thought fit : a captain, the hardiest and the most dextrous that history leaves us any account of ! who in many respects exceeded the greatest of the *Roman* emperors ; and whom *Herodian* makes no doubt to prefer at once to *Cæsar*, *Marius*, and *Sylla* ; whom he represents, equally expeditious, indefatigable, and patient of heat and cold ! at once beloved and revered almost to adoration, by his soldiers. A commander, who, tho' perhaps too indulgent to his soldiers in peace, yet, in time of war, was so severe in discipline, and so high in authority, that
 he

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he could, a little before this, turn back his army at a word, in the midst of flight and fear ; could not now influence them to assault the enemy, when they were almost at mercy : The manifest interposition of that mighty Being, who, at his pleasure, *poureth contempt upon princes ! and bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.* *

“ THUS (adds my author) [*ibid.*] are the
 “ proud assaults of the greatest monarchs,
 “ in their height of strength, but like the

* *Ammianus Marcellinus* mentions this city, and the calamities both these emperors underwent before it, in the 25th book of his history, in these words: *Prope Hatram venimus, vetus oppidum, in media solitudine positum, olimque desertum : quod diruendum adorti temporibus variis Trajanus & Severus principes bellicosi, cum exercitibus pene deleti sunt.*

And probably the risques that nation then ran, of being destroyed, or, at least, enslaved, (together with some other later dangers) were the chief reason which determined them never to shut themselves up any more within the enclosures of towns; but to live perpetually encamped with their kings: keeping the most diligent spies on all hands, (as *Thevenot* assures us they do) to give them early notice of the least approach or apprehension of danger. This nation seems now, as *Lucan* says of the *Parthians*, (l. 8.) *Nulli superabilis hosti est, libertate fuga.* The libertine may think them antiently safe, from a vast number of impregnable fortresses, which historians agree they were possessed of: They have now quitted them all, and travellers take notice of many of them that are ruinous and deserted; and yet the *Ishmaelites* still subsist, and are still in a state of as great safety and freedom as ever. Will any man, after this, wonder at that promise of God made by *Micah* (ch. v. 7, 8, 9.) to save the remnant of *Jacob* from their enemies, at the same time that he would destroy their strong holds: verse 11. *And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds.*

“ billows

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 145

“ billows of a swelling tide, which break
 “ over the banks, and immediately fall
 “ again. The Almighty hath set bounds
 “ to both, which they must not pass; and
 “ under his protection may *Isbmael* rest, as
 “ secure from the *Roman* Forces, to whom
 “ he had given all the Regions round about
 “ them, as *Edom* did, from the *Israelites*,
 “ when they *slew mighty Kings*; and cast
 “ out far greater neighbour nations. ”

T W O things the nature of the subject, and the singular Observations of *Dio*, make well worthy our notice, on this occasion; the first is, that the *Arabians* stood single, in this extremity, against the whole *Roman* power: for *Dio* expressly tells us*, that not one of their neighbours would assist them.

T H E next is, that *Severus* was remarkably fond of soldiers of all nations; for *Dio* observes, that *whereas other emperors were contented with guards of four different Europæan nations*, *Severus filled the city with a mixed multitude of soldiers of all kinds: savage to the sight, and fearful to the ear; rude and wild to converse with.* He observes after this, that *Byzantium* was beleagured, by the forces, *as it were of the whole world*; whereas then *Isbmael* was last invaded, when *Severus* was

* L. 75. in *Excerptis e Theodosio*, p. 849. Ed. Leuncl.

at rest from all his other wars, and the first army which he led against him, being repulsed with so much disgrace and ruin, he was under a necessity of repairing it; if *Dio* had not told us, that he made great preparations for the second siege, the nature of the thing would. The reparation of his own honour, his thirst of revenge, and all his hopes of success, called upon him not only to repair his army, but also to supply it, in the most ample and effectual manner he could; and therefore there is no doubt but he repaired it, with the best and hardiest veterans he had in the world; and also took care to have it sufficiently supplied; having now to do with the most furious and determined enemy, he had ever assaulted.

ALL this considered, I think we may fairly conclude, that *every man's hand*, was, at this time, emphatically *against Ishmael*; the hostile arms, as it were of the whole world, were now lifted up against him; and *his hand*, and his only, *against every man's*; and yet he dwelt, and still dwelleth, *in the presence of all his brethren*.

IT is likewise observable, that in this people, at this time, the free spirit of their father *Ishmael* shone out in all its glory: so determined were these sons of the *wild man*

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 147

man to be absolutely free, that they scorned so much as to be redeemed from servitude, by any thing but their valour: they disdained so much as to treat with the emperor of the world, upon that head; bravely resolved, or to live free, or to die so.

AFTER this, it is well known that the *Ishmaelites* joined the *Goths* against the *Romans*, and soon after overcame both; erecting an empire upon their ruins, the greatest that ever was erected in this world: and thus *Ishmael*, in the full extent of the prophecy, became a *great nation*.

'TIS true they had long before this, taken the name of *Saracens*: moved to do so, as some imagine, by the reproaches of the *Jews*, who upbraided them with bastardy, and so made them ashamed of their old name derived from *Hagar* and *Ishmael*, which carried reproach in the Sound: desiring to be considered as the descendants of *Abraham* by *Sarah*, (though others derive the name from another origine); but it is certain that they are not, and that they are no other than the *Scenitæ Arabes* under another name*; nor can I learn, but that they have entirely dropt that pretence long since, if in truth they ever took it up.

* See *Ammianus Marcellinus*, l. 23. *Jornandes*, l. 1. and *Sextus Rufus* breviar. Rom. Hist.

THUS is this extraordinary prophecy of *Isbmael*, signally fulfilled, in so many, and such very remarkable and surprizing circumstances: And I believe the hardiest enemy of revelation will not pretend, in this case, as they have adventur'd to do, in others, that the prophecy was given out after the event.

INDEED *Moses*, did himself come into the world, long after the accomplishment of one part of this prophecy; doubtless the principal parts of *Arabia* were then called after the twelve sons of *Isbmael*; who had erected principalities there; as they were also called in much later ages. *Le Clerc* hath discussed this matter, in his comment, with great labour and learning; and hath found evident remains of almost all their phylarchies or principalities among the Greek writers. *Melo* * is quoted by *Alexander Polyhistor*, as mentioning the fame of *Abraham's* wisdom; his traversing the desarts of *Syria*, and marrying two wives: one of them an *Egyptian* slave; by whom he had twelve sons, who became princes over the *Arabians*: from whom the twelve kings of the *Arabians* are named (says *Melo*) down to our times. And Saint *Jerom* says [*in quæst. Heb.*] that their tribes

* Apud Euseb. evang. præp. l. 9. c. 19.

were

were distinguished by the names of *Isbmael's* sons in his time. And *Thevenot* * tells us from his own knowledge, that they live in *Tribes*, and under *Phylarchs* to this day †: the truth of the *Mosaic* relation then in this point, is so far attested by all subsequent writers.

THE increase of *Isbmael* into twelve principalities, was well known in *Moses's* time; but that immense multiplication and national grandeur that was promised him, *Moses* could have no notion of, but from inspiration. Inasmuch as there was not then the least appearance or prospect of any such thing; nor, in fact, did it come to pass, till many hundreds of years after his death: nay, not till many hundreds of years after his history was translated and known all over the world. They (*Isbmael's* sons) were doubtless numerous in *Moses's* time; but yet the *Midianites*, and other sons of *Abraham*, by *Keturah*, were, in all probability, then much more numerous and powerful in *Arabia* than they: it is evident from the journeying of the children of *Israel*, that they had not then spread over that part of the desert, which they have since filled: and possess to this day; the *Midianites* and *Amalekites* were in

* Part 1. l. 2. c. 32.

† Nay some add, that their *Tribes* are still Twelve.

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that neighbourhood ; but no *Ishmaelites* are so much as heard of : nay, *Jeremiah* gives us plainly to understand, that no mortal dwelt in that desert at that time ; (ch. ii. 6.) he expressly calls it *a land which no man passed through, and where no man dwelt*. It is plain then that the sons of *Ishmael* were nothing like so numerous then, as they have been since, nor was it possible that they should in so short a time. Nor was it possible that any thing but Providence could foresee that immense grandeur and increase to which they are since swollen.

THAT they should be at enmity with all the world, and yet grow great, was a problem, the most opposite to all the rules and principles of human politicks, that could be imagined : and therefore no wise man, at least, no man, whose very being depended upon the reputation of his wisdom, (which was the case of *Moses*) would risque the utter ruin both of himself and character, by pronouncing so strange a seeming absurdity, and contradiction, from any other motive than the irresistible influence of divine inspiration. Especially since that prediction related to a people with whom he had nothing to do ; and for whom he could have no concern : nay, a prediction which must in its own nature, be exceedingly disagreeable to that proud selfish nation, with whom he had to do !
inasmuch

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 151

inasmuch as the promise to *Ishmael*, did, in point of that worldly grandeur, which they had so much at heart, evidently rival, if not exceed, that given to their father *Isaac*: and we may imagine, how ill they could bear such a preference, who could as little bear even any partition of the signal providence, and distinguished favour of God, as their mother could, that *Ishmael* should share the inheritance with *Isaac*; and were as ready to cry out with her, *Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son.*





DISSERTATION V.

Of Circumcision.

IN the 17th chapter of *Genesis*, God assures *Abraham*, that he will establish his covenant with him and his seed, that he shall be a *father of many nations*, and that *kings shall come out of him*; that he will be a God to him, and to his seed after him, and will give them the land wherein he was then a stranger, the land of *Canaan*; and, as a token of this covenant, circumcision is instituted, and strictly enjoined to be observed, with regard to every male of his family, whether born in it, or bought of a stranger.

AND *he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you: every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money, of any stranger which is not of thy seed; and the uncircumcised man-child,*

REVELATION *Examined*, &c. 153

child, whose flesh of his fore skin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant.

I OBSERVED, in a late dissertation, with what infinite wisdom Almighty God confounded the language of mankind, at *Babel*, in order to reduce them to the virtue and discipline of small seminaries; to prevent the growth of one universal empire, and, the consequence of that, universal corruption. And here again, we see the same design, farther pursued: though in a secondary way.

A RITE, of a very strange and singular nature, is here enjoined, under the penalty of utter excision, to the whole family of one man, whom it pleased God to distinguish in a very extraordinary manner, by numerous blessings, and many signal protections and manifestations of his Providence. And, as that family was very large, and made up of a great variety of people of different countries, the necessary consequence was, that, as any of them went off from thence, they carried whatever virtues or institutions they had learned there, into their own houses or countries, or wheresoever the providence of God conveyed them; and, as something would necessarily be added, or diminished, or varied, in these institutions, from length of time, or the different dispositions or degrees of

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of understanding, which ruled those who had learned them : here was a new foundation laid of new distinctions, to be dispersed through the world, with a prospect of much piety and virtue diffus'd through each. For, in the first place, *Abraham* journied with his father, from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, to *Haran*; and, from *Haran*, he journied to *Canaan*, with his wife, his kinsman *Lot*, and all the souls they had gotten in *Haran*, and to these were afterwards added, men servants and maid servants, from *Egypt*, and we find his family was soon after so numerous, that even when *Lot* was divided from him, he had 318 servants, born in his house, able to bear arms; nor was his family wholly made up even of *Chaldeans*, and *Egyptians*; for we learn from his own words, that *Eliezer* of *Damascus* was his steward; and stewards are seldom found in great families, without some dependants of their own; especially stewards of such power and credit as *Eliezer*, who was heir apparent to his master; and we know, that none are so ordinarily and naturally taken into favour, with such men, or indeed with any men, as those of their own kindred and country; and to all these were yet added men servants and maid servants of the land of *Canaan*, bestow'd by *Abimelech*; so that *Abraham's* family was made up of as great a variety of people, as could well be collected in that early age of the world.

Now,

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 155

Now, that *Abraham* was a good man, and studious to impress true piety and virtue upon the minds of his household, and that he actually did so, we are assured by God himself; *Gen. ch. xviii. 19. For I know him, (saith God) that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.**

AND, indeed, it was scarce possible, it should be otherwise with such as dwelt long in his family, under all the manifestations of divine mercy, vouchsafed to *Abraham*, and under such a steady and glorious example of true faith, piety, and virtue in him. And

* There is reason to believe, that the *Jews* were originally, and for a considerable time after the establishment of their commonwealth, remarkably just and honest, though, it is certain, that, long before the destruction of their temple and polity, as well as since, they have been remarkably otherwise. All things degenerate in length of time; and no institutions are proof against wealth and vanity. Nor can any argument be drawn, from their subsequent corruptions, to the disadvantage of their primitive righteousness. What the opinion of the more candid and considering heathen was concerning them, I think, may be fairly collected from the account *Strabo* gives of them, L. 16. He tells us, that *Moses* was an *Egyptian* priest, who was master of one part of the country, and could not bear the idolatry of his countrymen, who ascribed the images of beasts to God, as the *Greeks* did those of men; that to him the virtuous and religious resorted, whose leader he became, and established a considerable empire, where *Jerusalem* now stands; that his successors long continued in his institutions; and were truly religious and just; but afterwards degenerated into superstitious, tyrannical, &c.

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we find, that, in fact, his son *Isaac* is the most perfect character among all the patriarchs; and his servant, sent to fetch that son a wife, from among his own kindred, is the most accomplished instance of fidelity, diligence, true piety to God, and a firm confidence in the immediate superintendence, and interposition of his providence, that was ever yet heard of, in a man of that character; and, as we have all the reason in the world to believe, that all the rest of his sons* and servants, were as well, and as carefully trained up in true virtue, and the fear of God, as these, (as long as they continued with him) how naturally and necessarily must true virtue and true religion be diffused among mankind, by their means, as they themselves were dispersed among mankind! and they could not fail to be so dispersed, by the dispersion of his sons; to all whom (except *Ishmael*, sent away under the resentment of his wife) the text says, *he gave gifts*; and we know that men and maid servants were the

* Notwithstanding the many imputations upon the *Arabs* the descendants of *Abraham* by *Ishmael*, there are not wanting many writers of note, who greatly celebrate their national justice, and justify the imposts they exact from caravans and travellers, from the common right of all nations, to raise tributes from goods, and persons trading and negotiating in their country. So that they also may not unnaturally be allowed to have learnt of their father *Abraham* to keep the way of the Lord so far, as to *do justice and judgment*, which are the main points of that divine declaration concerning him, in the 8th ch. of *Gen.*

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chief gifts of that age. And as *Isaac* and *Isbmael* had a good understanding with one another, after this, (for we find they assisted together at their father's funeral) the goodness of *Isaac's* character, leaves no doubt but that he gave his brother a proper portion of his father's substance: nay, there is no doubt but that *Abraham* himself did so, after *Sarah's* death, if not sooner, to a son so tenderly loved. And indeed 'tis scarcely possible, that *Isbmael* could otherwise become so early great, as to have twelve sons, princes.

FROM all which, we may fairly conclude, that even in this respect, that glorious promise and privilege conferred upon *Abraham* by Almighty God, was also fulfilled in a lower way; that *in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed*.

HAVING thus prepared the way, the business of the following dissertation, shall be to shew,

First, THAT circumcision could obtain among mankind, no otherwise than by divine institution.

Secondly, TO enquire into the reasons of that institution.

And

And thirdly, To answer the objections raised on this head.

AND first, that circumcision could no otherwise obtain among mankind, than from divine institution, appears from the plainest reasoning in the world; because so painful and so inconvenient a rite, and, in some cases, (as that of *Abraham*) so dangerous *, which had

* A late ingenious writer hath in his letter to Dr. *Waterland*, treated this rite of circumcision as exceedingly dangerous in all cases: (supporting the opinion of a less considerable writer against revelation in that point) and consequently such as cannot reasonably be presumed to be originally derived from divine institution; from the command of a good and a merciful God. Now, as a very learned answer hath lately been published to this part of that letter, I beg leave to lay before the reader a short abstract of that controversy.

This gentleman (the letter-writer) grounds his judgment upon quotations from *Spencer* and *Lightfoot*, both whom, his adversary affirms him to have misquoted and misrepresented; as they also mistook and misrepresented the *Jewish* authorities, from whence they quoted; *Spencer* quotes *Maimonides*, as pronouncing that circumcision was not as a slight hurt of the leg, or burning of the arm, &c. but so dangerous, that it was not sometimes to be undergone without hazard of life. Now these last words, not to be sometimes undergone without hazard of life, are found to be *Spencer's* own addition, without any foundation from *Maimonides*: and the author of the letter to Dr. *Waterland*, hath changed *sometimes hazard* into *some hazard*, as if this operation were always attended with some hazard of life, which *Spencer* doth not say, nor could say with truth, experience being full against him.

Again, that ingenious letter-writer, concludes a note in that letter with these words: *If the first, second, third son should die by circumcision, those that were born after, were not circumcised; and yet Israelites in all respects: priests in all respects,* *Lightf.* vol. 2. p. 760.

Now

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had no foundation either in reason, or nature, or necessity, or the interest of any particular set of men, could never obtain in any nation, but from the injunction of some high and irresistible authority; and such only, in the present case, could be the authority of God! and, in general, the same reasoning with which I demonstrated sacrifices to be of

Now the words, *Israelites in all respects, and priests in all respects*, tho' seemingly quoted from *Lightfoot*, his answerer affirms not to be found in *Lightfoot*; but in this he is greatly mistaken: for they are the very words of *Lightfoot*. However the learned answerer produces several quotations from the *Jewish* writings, full to the point, that no uncircumcised priest was allowed amongst them; though, I think, we are little concerned to defend any of their allowances or ordinances contrary to the law of God.

The letter-writer also quotes *Lightfoot*, thus, *Lightfoot informs us that the frequent mortality it (i. e. circumcision) occasioned, produced a standing law, that when any person had lost three children successively by the operation, he was excused from circumcising the rest.* Now *Lightfoot* says not a word of a standing Law, on this head: but says, that if the first, second, third son should die by circumcision, those that were born after were not circumcised: but in this, I think, the learned answerer proves him to be mistaken in challenging him at the same time, to produce any instance of such mortality occasioned by circumcision: there is indeed an instance of a woman who lost two children after circumcision: but then those children were dangerously ill, at the time of the operation: and in all probability would have died without it; and as to the point of uncircumcised *Israelites* and *Priests*, it is certain the law of God allowed no such: and those expressions, this learned writer insists, were either figurative, or meant only of a second circumcision, not required by the law of God; a rabbinical and superstitious folly, which we are no way concerned to defend. See this matter more at large, in an answer to the letter to Dr. *Waterland* in relation to circumcision, &c. London, printed for *John Crownfield*, at the *Rising-Sun*, in *St. Paul's church-yard*.

divine

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divine institution, will hold full as strong here.

FIRST, because there could be no priestcraft in the case; for we read of no such thing as a priest of the race of *Abraham* for 400 years after this institution; nor had priests any emolument from this rite, nor was it their peculiar business. And,

IN the next place, I believe it will be allowed, that cruelty, *i. e.* unnecessary pain to ourselves, and our children, hath as little foundation in nature, as cruelty to the creatures; and therefore nothing but the same authority which established one, could establish both.

THE *Egyptians* indeed, pretended to practise this rite from no other principle but that of cleanliness, as *Herodotus* assures us: and possibly they might by that time, have so utterly lost all memorial of the true origin of this rite, as to know no other reason why they practised it; but at the same time, any man of common capacity cannot but see, that could never be the true reason of the institution. Since, 'tis evident to a demonstration, that they might be as perfectly clean to all intents and purposes, without this rite, as with it; and 'tis absurd to suppose, that any man of common sense, should
undergo

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undergo pain, or hazard himself, or force the same inconvenience upon his posterity for any end, which could be as fully and perfectly attain'd without those evils; and therefore this pretence is utterly idle and absurd.

OTHERS have supposed, that this rite was instituted, for prevention of diseases, incident to that part of the body; as others think the part cut off, inconvenient in those countries where this practice prevailed.

IN answer to these, I readily agree with the enemies of revelation, that God *makes nothing in vain, much less what requires cutting off*: and whenever these objectors shall prove, that any nation under heaven, ever had their nails regularly pared away to prevent whitloes, or their jugular glands regularly cut out, to prevent quinsies, or their noses constantly cut off at eight days old, to prevent polypus's, it will then be time enough, to enter into a serious confutation of such senseless suppositions; and therefore it being demonstrable, that this practice could have no foundation, either in reason, or nature, or necessity, or interest, there is nothing to which it can be referred, but the appointment of Almighty God.

I PROCEED therefore in the second place, to enquire into the reasons of that institution.

AND doubtless one reason of it, was, to be at once a trial of *Abraham's* faith, and a proof of the covenant then entered into with him.

FOR since *Abraham* was to be *the father of the faithful*, the most eminent example of trust and confidence in the promises of God, tho' all human appearances and probabilities were full against him: an example, which was to extend to all future ages! how otherwise could that example be made so effectual, for our imitation and instruction, as by conveying a certain memorial of it down to all ages! such a memorial, as should exhibit him steady and resolved under the severest trials, and constantly and gloriously triumphant, and rewarded afterwards. And that this was one plain intention of that rite, is, I think, very reasonably to be inferred, from these words, *Gen. xvii. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin: and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you:* And again, verse 13. *He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant.* And *Tacitus*, who hath vended

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vended many falshoods and absurdities concerning the *Jews*, yet plainly saw the reason of their circumcision, thus far, *viz.* that they used it as a mark to be distinguished from other people * and *Moses's* account of the origine of this rite, is the only account of it consistent with common sense ; from whence it is easy to observe that it was instituted to separate a particular race of men from the rest, for the preservation of true religion ; and to be a perpetual memorial of that separation ; to be a perpetual memorial of that covenant into which God then entered with *Abraham*, upon a very singular occasion. The plain account of it stands thus :

ABRAHAM had a solemn promise of a son from Almighty God : the blessing was long deferred : at last granted by a bond-woman ; and that son, some few years after he was given, when his father had now fixed his heart and his hopes upon him, apparently given up for lost ! and expressly refused to be his heir. He is now again promised another son by his wife ; and the next moment compelled to practise a rite, which, in all human probability, must defeat

* *Circumcidere genitalia institueret, ut diversitate noscantur.*

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that promise ; and yet he obeys instantly * : How glorious an example is this ? And how admirably are all the circumstances of this institution fitted, to perpetuate the memory of it, with all his posterity ! to make it memorable and illustrious to the whole earth ?

WITH what wisdom *Abraham's* family was constituted of various nations to this very end, and they, with his children, dispersed into various regions of the earth, I already observed in the introduction to this discourse ; and since he himself had by the peculiar appointment of Almighty God, traversed a great part of the then known world,

* The danger *Abraham* underwent in that operation, at that advanced age, and the very indecency of it in a man of his years and dignity, are in the place of ten thousand proofs that it was forced upon him ! and nothing but the irresistible authority of God, could be a sufficient force in those circumstances. *Theodotus's* verses upon this subject (quoted by *Eusebius, Evan. præpar. l. 9. c. 22.*) carry their own evidence with them: he tells us, that *Abraham* readily executed, because *God himself commanded.* The intelligent reader will, I doubt not, thank me for four antient Greek verses upon this subject, in my Judgment not unworthy the *Homeric* age.

Ὅς ποτ' ἔης πάτρις ἐξήγαγε δῖον Ἀβραάμ,
 Αὐτὸς ἀπ' ἑρᾶν ἔλεγετ' ἀνέρα παντὶ σὺν οἴκῳ
 Σάρκ' ἀποσυλῆσαι ποσὴς ἀπὸ, καὶ ρ' ἐτελέσσειν,
 Ἀσεμῶδες δὲ τίτυνται, ἔπειθ' ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἔειπε.

In *English* thus : *Who* formerly led forth divine *Abraham* from out of his own country, the same commanded the man with his whole house, from heaven, to circumcise the flesh of their foreskin: He executed: it was steadily done, because *God himself* said it should be done.

before

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before this time, under the fullest evidence of the divine protection, attending him where-ever he went, the dispersion of his family afterwards, (many of whom were eye-witnesses of the divine favours to him, and all the males of them, carrying about them the sure marks of his Maker's covenant with him *) could not but diffuse a thorough persuasion of God's manifold mercies, and gracious promises to *Abraham*, into many remote regions of the earth ; and convey both the memory of those mercies, and the piety which they themselves had derived from his influence, to their children ; and by these means, an extensive and lively memorial of God's providence, and sure interposition in the government of the world, was long propagated and preserved in the world ; for the impressions of piety and virtue on the minds of men, must be, in proportion to the signal force with which those impressions are made, and the frequency with which they are repeated. And since God himself foresaw, that these impressions would be effectually made by *Abraham*, upon his whole family, and posterity, and when, at the same time,

* A candid man should, methinks, be little at a loss to account for the origine of circumcision among other nations, when *Abraham* had so many hundreds of servants of different nations, circumcised at once in his house : and, in all probability, many thousands even in his own house before his death. To say nothing of his many sons, and sons sons.

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they were attended with so distinguished a seal of the divine covenant, it was hardly possible, but that they must long be propagated and preserved in the world.

BESIDES all this, the covenant made with *Abraham*, was fitted to raise, and to fix the attention of all mankind. It was a covenant of universal concern; *all the nations of the earth* were to be *blest in him**: and most regions of the then known world, had men of their own nation, men of credit and veracity, to attest the truth and certainty of this covenant to them. And therefore, both curiosity and interest, would naturally excite men, to attend to this matter: and to examine it with care; and the careful examination of such truths, as men find it their interest to embrace, seldom fails to end in conviction.

AND whoever considers how signally and universally the fame of *Abraham* hath been, from the earliest times, and still is extended over all the east, will have no reason to

* If we may believe the best accounts of antiquity, *Abraham* was (as shall be shewn hereafter) the great instrument in the hand of God, of diffusing true religion and wisdom over the most eminent regions of the world then known; and the natural propagation and dispersion of these blessings over the earth, made him very properly a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

believe this a light or a groundless speculation.

ANOTHER reason why this rite was instituted, was to be an emblem to the people of God, of true purity, and a disregard of sensual enjoyments : that they should renounce every thing that had no other use, in the degeneracy of our nature, but to cherish the delusions of sense, and leave our appetites less in our power ; a document which men, skill'd in the knowledge of nature, will find to be sufficiently implied in this institution. Hence it is, that *Moses* (in the 10th chapter of *Deuteronomy*) commands the children of *Israel* to circumcise their hearts : and in the 30th chapter of the same book, among many other blessings promised to obedience, he adds this also ; *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* And the stile of all the scriptures both of the old and new testament, is in the same analogy ; plainly implying this rite to be an emblem of spiritual purity.

BUT doubtless the main reason of this institution was to separate a peculiar people to the service of God, by such a distinction, as should demonstrate itself to be of divine original ; as being no otherwise to be accounted

for ; and in that demonstration, be a perpetual, a living, and an irresistible proof of his covenant with *Abraham*. And such a proof it is, as hath confounded the whole infidel world, from the days of *Julian* the apostate emperor, to this day ; and will continue to do so to the day of judgment. Such a proof as Infidels have been called upon, challenged, provoked to confute* : and whether they have confuted it, will be best seen by all the objections, which their impotence hath hitherto raised, with any colour of reason, against it.

AND all these seem to be principally founded upon the suggestions of Sir *John Marsham* : a very learned man of the last age, from whom, some late writers, whom I will not presume to pronounce very unlearned, have transcribed without scrutiny : and in the natural and unhappy consequence of such negligence, retailed without truth. And therefore leaving these secondary objectors to such as are at leisure from matters of more importance, I shall examine the grounds of this gentleman's conjectures ; and content myself with demonstrating them to be very ill founded.

* See *Lesley's* method with the deists, and the defence of it.

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IN the first place then, he tells * us, that *Abraham* was not circumcised, when he went into *Egypt*, nor in more than 20 years after; that his posterity were circumcised both before their descent into *Egypt*, and during their continuance there; but were not circumcised for 40 years after, as long as *Moses* lived; till *Joshua* caused them to be circumcised; and that God approved the action, saying, (*Josh. v. 9.*) *This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you*: from hence 'tis inferred, (not indeed by this learned author himself, tho' he did every thing but make the inference) that this institution had some peculiar regard to *Egypt*, as if it were only practised by the children of *Israel*, to make them more agreeable to the *Egyptians*, whilst they were amongst them; and therefore neglected, as soon as they were separated from them.

THE answer to this insinuation, is obvious: if this rite were practised only in compliment to the *Egyptians*, how it came to be practised by the people of God, upon their entrance into *Canaan*, when they were wholly separated from the *Egyptians* and had nothing more to do with them?

* *Secul. 5. p. 73. Lipsiæ edit.*

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this then is a groundless suggestion, it being demonstrable that this could not be the reason, why that rite was omitted in the wilderness: because if it were, the reason would be much stronger, why it should be omitted in *Judæa*; the true reason then, of the omission of this rite in the wilderness, seems plainly to be this; because they were then in a state of perpetual wandering; which would make this practice not only very troublesome, but very dangerous: since it is known, that wounds demand rest, and such perpetual disquiet, and the frequent deaths consequent to it, would be not only a new, but a constant, and, in truth, a more justifiable source of complaint, against God and their leader; and would, at the same time, of necessity destroy a great number of those very men, whose swords were to subdue the promised land. And as this reason carries its own evidence with it, I think it may also be, in some measure, collected from the fifth chapter of *Joshua*, at the fifth and sixth verses; *Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way, as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised, for the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness till, &c.* It seemed good therefore to Almighty God, to suspend this rite, in that unsettled sojourning state, till the instant of their entrance into the
land

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land of *Canaan*, i. e. till he placed them in the midst of their enemies; and there they were circumcised: not by the order of *Joshua*, as it is insinuated in the objection, but by the express command of God himself; to let them see, that they were under his immediate protection; for the greatest part of their men of war, was by this means utterly disqualified for battle, for several days; and if their enemies had come upon them in that condition, they must have been destroyed. And what could hinder their enemies from destroying them, but the immediate protection of Providence! and this circumstance, is, (notwithstanding the impressions of terror, which God's signal drying up of *Jordan* before the children of *Israel*, had made upon the neighbour nations) a demonstration, that the observance of this rite, at that time, could only be in obedience to the divine command; because otherwise, no captain of common sense, would enjoin it at that time; since such an injunction, without the immediate appointment and protection of Almighty God, would be in effect, to give up himself and his people at once, into the power of their enemies. Nor would a people so obstinate as they were, obey him, without a full assurance of such a command.

Now

NOW this rite, being practis'd at this time, upon men in maturity, under the express declaration of a command from God, every single man that received it, was a competent judge whether it was actually commanded by God; (and what else could oblige them to submit to it, in that imminent and immediate article of danger, is unimaginable) and consequently they were competent witnesses to their children, that it was so commanded. So that the rite was now renewed, with more evidence of divine authority, than even in the original institution of it, to *Abraham*. And this I take to be the true comment upon that command from God to *Joshua*, (which hath been so much controverted by men of learning) *Josh. ch. 5. v. 2. At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make the esharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel a second time.* That is, let this institution be now publickly and solemnly renewed upon you. Well knowing, that after so solemn a renewal of it, in those circumstances, it could never after become a doubt amongst them, whether this rite were of divine institution.

BUT 'tis urged, that God himself tells them, that he had now *rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off them*; from whence 'tis inferred, that incircumcision was reproachful among the *Egyptians*. I answer, that, possibly,
it

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it might ; but yet, that, by no means, follows from those words ; for, *the reproach of Egypt* may as well signify what was reproachful to the *Egyptians* themselves, as what was reproachful in their esteem. To illustrate this by one instance, among a great number that might be offered : In the 33d chapter of *Jeremiah*, v. 19. *Ephraim* is introduced lamenting in this manner ; *I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth* ; here the reproach of his youth is plainly the reproach to which that youth was exposed, the reproach which it had deserved ; and may not *the reproach of Egypt* be interpreted in the same analogy, the reproach to which *Egypt* was exposed, the reproach which *Egypt* had deserved ; and we know, that incircumcision was that with which the *Jews* reproached other nations.

AGAIN, it is evident, that the children of *Israel*, invading *Canaan*, from *Egypt*, must be considered by the *Canaanites* as *Egyptians* ; as a race of men who had dwelt in *England* for four hundred years, if they were to invade *France*, would undoubtedly be considered by the *French* as *Englishmen* : Now we know that nothing could be more reproachful to the children of *Israel*, than to be called by the name of any other people, especially that people whom they now most of all, and very justly, detested, viz. the *Egyptians* ; and
therefore

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therefore when God had fixed such a mark upon them, as would certainly distinguish them from the people of *Egypt*, what could be a more natural reflection, on that occasion, than to tell them, that he had *now taken off the reproach of Egypt* from them, *i. e.* that they should now no longer suffer under the imputation of being fugitive and vagabond *Egyptians*.

BUT 'tis urged, by the learned man already mentioned, that the *Egyptians* used this rite of circumcision from the beginning.

HE says so indeed, but the question is how he proves it? and, in truth, he does not so much as pretend to prove it, otherwise than by the testimony of two *Greek* historians, who expressly say so, *Herodotus*, and *Diodorus*. Now, to prove it by the testimony of *Herodotus*, is to prove it by the testimony of an historian owned to be fabulous, even by the writers of his own country; * who wrote his history, above 1000 years after *Moses*; and an historian from a country, which did not so much as know the use of letters † 'till six hundred years after *Moses*; and had confessedly no record, or monument of

* Vid. Joseph. contra Apion. Diod. Sicul. Lib. 1.

† Sir Isaac Newton's chronology.

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learning amongst them, even when he wrote. 'Tis plain then, this author can have no credit from any knowledge of his own, or records of his own country; and therefore what he says upon this head can only rest upon the credit of the *Egyptians*, who told him so. That is, upon the credit of those very men, who told him * that, from their first king to *Sethon*, the priest of *Vulcan*, there had passed 11340 years. That, in that space, there had past just 341 generations, and just 341 high priests, and just 341 kings; and that, in that time, the sun rose twice where it now sets, and set twice where it now rises; and all this, without causing any sort of change in *Egypt*, either with regard to the earth, or the river, or health, or death. The very same men who also told him, † that from *Dionusos* to *Amasis*, was 15000 years; and that they spoke this from certain knowledge; because they constantly made exact computations of time. And therefore the sum of Sir *John Marsham's* Argument, from *Herodotus*, is this.

THE *Egyptians* undoubtedly used circumcision from the beginning, because a lying historian tells us so, upon the credit of the most shameless, notorious, abandoned lyars, that ever were heard of in the world.

* Herod. Lib. 2. Ed. Lond. p. 144; 145.

† Ibid. p. 146.

AND, besides all this, it is, I think, sufficiently demonstrable, that the *Egyptians* had not circumcision from the beginning. For the *Colchians*, (i. e. the *Casblubim* of *Moses*) are allowed to be a colony of the *Egyptians*; and the *Philistim* are the descendants of the *Colchians*, as *Moses* affirms, and *Bockart* proves, (and the learned Dr. *Patrick* is of the same opinion). Now, the *Philistim* (i. e. the *Philistines*) were not circumcised. The sons were not circumcised, and shall we believe the fathers were? 'Tis true, the *Colchians* were circumcised in the time of *Herodotus*; and nothing is more natural than for colonies to derive customs and manners from their mother country: but, I think, it is very evident, that they were not circumcised when they first left *Egypt*, (for then the *Philistines* would have been circumcised) consequently, that rite was then unknown in *Egypt*.

BESIDES, *Herodotus* tells us, that the *Syrians*, and they who live about the river *Thermodon*, and *Parthenius*, and their neighbours the *Macrones*, had but very lately (*νεωσι*) learnt this rite, from the *Colchians*. Had this rite always obtained among the *Colchians*, or as early as the age of *Abraham*, methinks, their example, or authority, or intercourse, or all together, might more naturally have influenced or infected their neighbours somewhat

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what sooner ; might have operated upon their near neighbours in less time than fifteen hundred years.

BUT it seems the same *Herodotus* tells us * also, that the *Phœnicians* and *Syrians*, who inhabit *Palestine*, confessed that they learnt circumcision from the *Egyptians*, and possibly he might have heard so ; and what then ? he says the *Phœnicians* learned it from the *Egyptians* ; *Santhoniatho* says, they learnt it from *Saturn*, (i. e. as good criticks have made it very probable, from *Abraham*) Which shall we believe in this case ? Shall we believe *Herodotus*, who knew nothing of the *Phœnicians* ? or *Santhoniatho*, who was well-acquainted with them ?

BESIDES, the *Phœnicians* † were originally *Idumæans*, as *Ammonius* affirms ; now, the *Idumæans*, beyond all question, had circumcision, not from the *Egyptians*, but from *Edom*.

BUT *Herodotus* tells us, that the *Syrians*, who inhabit *Palestine*, confessed, that they learnt circumcision from the *Egyptians* ; and possibly, they did confess this in his time : but the question is, who these were. Now Sir *Isaac Newton* hath shewn (nor is this

* Ibid. p. 127.

† Others think the *Jews* were now known by the name of *Phœnicians*. See *Bochart. Phal.* l. 4. c. 34.

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among his singularities) that *Herodotus* was contemporary with *Nehemiah*; (*Helvicus* places him a little earlier, *viz.* in the time of the captivity) and every one knows, that the *Jews* were then only rebuilding the city of *Jerusalem*; and that the people who inhabited *Palestine* at that time, were not *Jews*, but a mongrel race, settled there by *Salmanasser*, when the ten tribes were carried away into captivity; a race of men who were at mortal enmity with the *Jews*; and doubtless would rather ascribe the origine of any of their customs, to any nation, under heaven, than to that nation, whom they detested above all others! and no man of common sense, who knows any thing of the *Jews*, and how much they glory, and ever have gloried, in their father *Abraham*, will ever believe, that any one of them, from the foundation of the world, ever owned or imagined this rite derived to them otherwise than from him; or from him, otherwise than by the express command of God; * and therefore the learned man above mentioned can surely derive but little honour from an opinion supported by such testimony.

* That circumcision was divinely instituted, appears (I think) to a demonstration, even from the superstition of the *Egyptians*. They paid an uncommon veneration to a certain kind of ape amongst them, who wanted the prepuce, upon a firm persuasion, that this was owing to the immediate appointment of Almighty God. What can be more clearly implied in this, than a firm persuasion, that circumcision was originally of divine institution?

BUT

BUT it is further urged, that *Diodorus Siculus* * also says, that the *Jews* were a colony from the *Egyptians*, and learnt circumcision from them.

IT is owned, he does; but then it must also be owned, on the other hand, that he expressly reports this upon the credit of the *Egyptians* themselves, who never yet stuck at any fiction or falsehood, how shocking and monstrous soever, which they imagined could aggrandize their nation; and, as they were sufficiently infamous on this score, long before *Diodorus* was acquainted with them, so it is certain that they had in no degree recovered their credit in his time; but were rather much improved in lying, as Sir *Isaac Newton* very judiciously observes; and therefore this testimony, being upon the same foundation with that of *Herodotus*, deserves just the same regard, *i. e.* just the same contempt.

BESIDES, it being notorious, that the *Jews* came out from *Egypt*, what could be more natural, in the estimation of any historian, who knew this, without knowing the circumstances of their living there, as a distinct

people, and their departure thence, under the manifest protection of God, than to conclude, that they were an *Egyptian* colony? And, being so deemed, whatever institutions they were found to observe, in common with *Egypt*, would very naturally be judged to be derived from thence; and it is undeniable that *Strabo* judged it thus; for, speaking of the practice of circumcision peculiar to the *Egyptians*, * he adds, which the *Jews* do, by their law, who were antiently *Egyptians*.

BUT, it seems, *Philo* defends this rite of his religion, from the practice of the *Egyptians*, a great and wise nation; but says not one word of its being derived to them from the *Jews*.

THAT is, *Philo*, a wise man, (a man of the world) who had considerable transactions with the heathen world, defended this rite of his religion in such a manner, as would bring most credit to that practice, and, at the same time, give no offence, to those he dealt with; whereas, had he insisted upon this rite's being derived to the *Egyptians*, from the *Jews*, he had offended the heathen world without bringing any advantage, either to his

* He distinguishes two operations of this kind, in use with the *Egyptians*, circumcision of the males, and excision of the females.

country, or the rite he would defend, which would, perhaps, be less revered, if it were believed to be originally theirs.

BESIDES, *Philo*, perhaps, knew little of the true origine of this rite among the *Egyptians* : it might have been derived from *Joseph* (as the *Jews* generally believe it was) ; it might have been derived from *Isbmael*, or the sons of *Keturah* : perhaps, he did not know how it was derived ; or, if he did, he did not care to tell. And surely it will always be found a very weak and injudicious way, to attempt to overthrow any truth, by arguments drawn from the ignorance, or prudential silence of its defenders, from whence nothing can be inferred to its disadvantage.

IN the last place, 'tis objected, that *Josephus*, quoting the testimony of *Herodotus*, against *Apion*, owns, that the *Jews* did circumcise ; but makes no objection to that historian's account of the origine of this rite.

IN answer to this, I cannot but observe with concern, that I never saw a less candid representation of any point than this ; would not any man that heard the objection, believe that *Apion* had charged the *Jews* with having learnt this rite from the *Egyptians* ? and that *Josephus* was silent under the charge, and,

consequently, in effect, owned it? This is certainly what any reader would apprehend, at first sight; and yet, upon enquiry, nothing in nature can be more injurious or unjust; for, in fact, *Apion* never objected any such thing to him, and consequently, *Josephus* had no occasion to answer an objection which had never been made to him.

THE case was this; *Apion*, among other calumnies, upbraided the *Jews* with being an obscure and upstart race, unknown to the *Greek* historians*. In answer to this, after *Josephus* hath sufficiently shewn his contempt of the *Greeks*, their ignorance, and the causes of it, yet to confute this calumny of his adversary, he proves from quotations out of every one of the *Greek* historians of note, that the *Jews* were not unknown to them; and, after some others, he mentions *Herodotus*, in this manner; † *Neither was Herodotus of Halicarnassus ignorant of our nation, but seems to have mentioned 'em after a fashion*; and then proceeds to quote that passage from him, where he says, that the *Syrians* who inhabit *Palestine*, learnt circumcision from the *Egyptians*; now, says *Josephus*, the *Jews* are the only

* Vide *Joseph. cont. Apion. l. 1. p. 1329. 1335. edit. Oxon.*

† *Ibid. p. 1345.*

inhabitants of *Palestine*, that circumcise! and from thence he infers, that *Herodotus* had also heard of his nation, and made mention of them.

THE question was not, whether *Herodotus* mentioned them right or wrong, but whether he knew them, or mentioned them at all? The point in debate was, whether the *Jews* were known to the *Greek* historians; and *Josephus* proves they were, because they all mentioned them: his business was not to dispute, whether they had given right accounts of 'em, but to prove that they knew them; and when that was once made out, *Apion's* calumny, *that they were an obscure, upstart race*, was so far confuted. *Josephus's* dispute was not with *Herodotus*, but with *Apion*; consequently his business was not to confute *Herodotus*, but to confute *Apion*: and when he had confuted him, he had no more to do: especially considering that he had already fully declared his sense in this point, in his history, to which he refers the reader, in the introduction to this discourse. But at the same time, it is sufficiently insinuated in this very passage from *Josephus*, that *Herodotus*, tho' he had heard of the *Jews*, (as *Josephus* erroneously concludes from that passage) yet he knew little of them: *he seems to have mentioned us* (says he) *after a fashion*; an expression, which plainly implies, that *Josephus*

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sephus had an utter contempt of his ignorance on this head : (nay, it implies more ; it implies, that *Josephus* was under some doubt, whether they really were the people which *Herodotus* spoke of.) And doubtless, this was one reason, why he elsewhere treats *Herodotus* as an historian of little credit even with his own countrymen ; as in fact he was.

ALL the inference I would draw from hence, is, that we should not hastily adopt the opinions, even of men of great learning, without weighing the reasons on which they are built : neither should we adopt any opinions of men, in opposition to the will of God sufficiently revealed ; forasmuch as *the wisdom of men is foolishness with God* ; and the most refined and solid judgments they ever yet made, weighed with the divine declarations and decisions in the scriptures, will, upon the balance, be found *lighter than vanity*.

BUT we are told by some very ingenious writers on the side of irreligion, that the opinion of circumcision's being derived from the *Egyptians* to the *Jews*, is the more probable, because it was not till after the Lord had ordered Moses into Egypt, that the Lord met him by the way in the inn, and sought

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sought to kill him for not circumcising his child.

THE force of the argument stands thus ; *Moses* is sent by God, to the children of *Israel*, to deliver them from servitude and captivity, by a high hand, by inflicting calamities and judgments of various kinds, upon the *Egyptians* ! and therefore, in order to qualify him for that employment, he obliged him to execute a rite upon his son, which was not to recommend him to the *Israelites*, but to the *Egyptians* : not to recommend him to the *Israelites*, whom he was to assemble, to exhort, and to conduct ; but to recommend him to the *Egyptians*, whom he was to terrify, to afflict, and to destroy. This is reasoning, I must confess, of a very uncommon cast ; and, I frankly own, that the man who sees the force of it, to the advantage of its author's cause, hath a sagacity very superior to any thing I can pretend to : now I should very naturally conclude, that a son of *Abraham*, who was sent to the sons of *Abraham*, under the express character of a messenger *from the God of Abraham*, to be their deliverer, leader, and law-giver, must come very ill recommended under every one of those characters, if he were found himself to live in an open neglect of that institution, and open disobedience to that command given by God himself to *Abraham* !

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Abraham! and that therefore, there was an absolute necessity that his son should be circumcised.

BUT then I must own, that this is not thinking *freely* ; because it is thinking, as I am necessarily tied down to think, from the nature and reason of things.

THUS far, I think, it is evident that there is no solid or just foundation either from antiquity, or the circumcision of *Moses's* son, to believe that circumcision had its rise among the *Egyptians*. And besides all this, I think it demonstrable from the scripture, that it was not known in *Egypt*, when *Abraham* was there.

FOR we find, that when this rite was enjoined him by Almighty God, about twenty years after he left *Egypt*, he actually circumcised every male in his house ; now we know, that he brought men-servants and maid-servants with him, from *Egypt* ; whether they were presents made to him (as was usual in those times), or purchases made there, by him, is not so clear from the text ; the text says, he had them, but does not say, how : Now, I think, it cannot well be supposed, that all these *Egyptian* men-servants died within twenty years, when the ordinary period of life was, at least a hundred years ;
or,

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or, if we suppose that they all died within this period ; we can't well suppose that they all died without some male issue ; especially in so prolific a family as that of *Abraham* was ; and yet unless these two strange suppositions are taken for granted, it is evident that circumcision was not known in *Egypt*, in *Abraham's* time ; because every male of his house was circumcised, when he himself was ; consequently those *Egyptian* servants, and their descendants were then circumcised also ; which could not be, if they had undergone that rite before : now the text says, that *Abraham* took *Ismael* his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money ; and lest this should not be thought to take in his whole family, it adds, every male among the men of *Abraham's* house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin, in the self-same day as God had said unto him.

If it be asked, why circumcision was ordained on the eighth day from the child's birth ? I think, we may answer (without pretending to know every reason of this circumstance, or precluding any) that an observation of *Aristotle's* sufficiently justifies the wisdom of this appointment : he tells us, (in the seventh book of his history of animals) that *most insanss die before the seventh day,*

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day, and that for that reason men gave them names on that day, as then confiding more in their health. Had God appointed circumcision earlier, the ordinary mortality of children, from other causes, antecedent to this period, had infallibly been imputed to this rite ; and had he deferred it much longer, the growing fondness of parents, would often delay, and perhaps, in the end, defeat the institution.

It being now, I hope, sufficiently apparent that *Abraham* did not learn this rite from the *Egyptians*, I beg leave to add another observation ; and that is, that this rite, as it was practised among the *Jews*, was, in all probability, no rite among the *Egyptians*, at the time of *Moses's* birth : this, I think, appears from the conduct and expressions of *Pharaoh's* daughter, upon finding *Moses* in the ark : that he was then circumcised, is out of all doubt ; because he was a goodly (that is, a hale, beautiful) child of three months old ; and that *Pharaoh's* daughter knew him to be so, is, I think, sufficiently evident from the words of the text ; (*Exod. ch. vi. 6.*) *And when she had opened,* (the *English* translation adds it, but it is not in the original) *she saw the child, and behold the babe wept, and she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children.* Take then the import of these words,
(confi-

REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 189

(considered in the decency of the scripture style) added to the curiosity, natural, and reasonable, and such, I believe, as never was left unsatisfied on such an occasion, and, I think, we must fairly conclude, that this lady knew *Moses* to be a *Hebrew* child by the sign of circumcision, which distinguished the *Hebrew* children, from those of the *Egyptians*.

SOME indeed imagine, that *Pharaoh's* daughter knew him to be a *Hebrew child*, merely from finding him in the river: because her father had commanded all the male children of the *Hebrews* to be thrown into the river (*Exod. i. 22.*): but, I own, I can't see the force of this argument, because *Pharaoh* commanded all the male children of the *Hebrews* to be drowned, therefore a child found in the river, in a condition to be most effectually preserved from drowning, was known by that mark, to be a *Hebrew* child.

BESIDES, whoever considers the stile, in which *Pharaoh's* daughter speaks of him, must see, that she knew his sex.

SINCE then it appears, that the *Egyptians* were strangers to all circumcision when *Abraham* practised this rite, and when the *Colchians* came out from them, and to infant-circumcision when *Moses* was born; the only question

question now remaining, is, How they came by it ?

AND all this is very clearly to be accounted for, from the scriptures, joined to the accounts of the *Greek* historians : *Herodotus* tells us, that it was doubtful, whether the *Egyptians* learned this rite from the *Ethiopians*, or the *Ethiopians* from them ; and *Diodorus* tells us *, that the *Egyptians* learned their laws and customs from the *Ethiopians* : *Herodotus* notes also, that there was a tradition, that the antient *Egypt* was only that part of it, which was then, and is now, known by the name of *Delta* ; that all the rest of the country so called, belonged originally to *Arabia* and *Ethiopia*. And nothing is more credible than this : since all kingdoms were originally very small ; and extended by degrees ; and it is well known, that the antient *Ethiopia*, is part of that country, since known by the name of *Arabia* : indeed *Strabo*, who wrote later, supposes its antient dimensions to be much larger, viz. from *Syenne* to the *Mediterranean* : but then he adds, that all the region on the left-hand of the *Nile*, that is, from thence to the *Sinus Arabicus*, was *Arabia* : and that *Helio-polis* was in *Arabia* : Now *Moses* tells us, in the 25th chapter of *Genesis*, that *Isbmael's* sons dwelt from *Havilah* unto *Shur*, which is

* L. 2.

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before Egypt. His wife was an *Egyptian*, as was his mother; and probably his sons matched there: and nothing is clearer from the accounts of scripture, joined to those of heathen antiquity, as well as later writers, than that his descendants (in process of time) possessed themselves of all the *Arabia's*, which comprehended *Ethiopia*, and a great part of the present *Egypt*, (at least, so far possessed themselves of them, that the other nations, who were originally mixed with them, were swallowed up in theirs) and can it be a reasonable doubt, whether they introduced this rite of their religion, where-ever they settled! tho' it is possible, that as the *Egyptians* expelled these *Ismaelites*, the rites they introduced were, in a great measure, neglected or abolished. But that the *Ismaelites* did introduce this rite where-ever they prevailed, can scarce be doubted, when it is known they so strictly adhere to it to this day; and the reason of this adherence is evident, because *Ismael*, (and his mother) who taught it them, certainly knew that it came from God; and in consequence of that certain knowledge, inculcated it carefully into all his descendants. And when we see them so religiously adhere to it, to this day, can it be doubted whether they established it in *Egypt*, if the greatest part of *Egypt* was afterwards in their possession? as in all probability it was; and if it was doubtful to *Herodotus*, whether

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whether the *Egyptians* learned it from the *Ethiopians*, or the *Ethiopians* from them, can it be a doubt with any candid man of common sense, which of them practised it originally : who sees the testimony of *Diodorus*, and the only rational account of this rite's being derived to the *Ethiopians*, from an historian vastly more antient, and upon all accounts infinitely more authentick, than *Herodotus*.

OR suppose it not fully established there by the posterity of *Ismael*, can we doubt whether it might easily be established by *Joseph*, in the course of the most absolute ministry that ever was heard of, for fourscore years together ?

WE know that in the first fourteen years of that period, he reduced the whole kingdom into the absolute power of his master ; their goods, their lands, their persons, were *Pharaoh's*, *i. e.* in effect were *Joseph's* as far as his virtue would suffer him to employ them ; and is it not the known practice, nay, is it not the pride of slaves, to imitate their master's manners, if he seems any way solicitous to have them do so ? Can it be doubted that the *Egyptians* would easily embrace the religious rites of so great, so wise, so absolute a minister, who had preserved every one of their lives ; who had saved the whole
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REVELATION *Examin'd*, &c. 193

kingdom from ruin, and was himself so visibly, and remarkably guided by the spirit of God*.

IF circumcision then was so early established in *Egypt*, 'tis evident to the meanest capacity, that these are the only rational ways of accounting for that establishment. Especially if it be consider'd yet farther, that *Joseph* married the daughter of an *Egyptian* priest, *Asenath*, the daughter of *Potipherah*, priest of *On* †: and this, in the height of his power and grandeur! when he might easily make it one condition of his marriage, that all the males of that family, into which he married, should be circumcised. And can any thing be more probable, than that he did so, when his brethren made the same a necessary condition of giving their sister *Dinah* to *Shechem*, the son of *Hamor*, in marriage, when they were very far from being upon equal terms with *Shechem*, who had before defiled their sister, and in whose land they dwelt? much less were they upon superior terms with him, as *Joseph* was very superior to any subject of *Egypt*, at the

* There are some memorials of *Joseph* still extant in *Egypt*; his granaries and the prison where he was confin'd; and learned men have concluded, with much appearance of truth, that the chief of their antient religious rites, were originally memorials of him. See *Stillingfleet's origines sacra*.

† Gen. xli. 45.

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time of his marriage ; yet under these disadvantages the sons of *Jacob* insisted on this condition ; * *We cannot (said they) do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised ; for that were a reproach unto us. But in this will we consent unto you : if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised, then we will give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and will become one people.* Now if this was their true sense, (as it certainly might be, tho' they deal deceitfully in the conduct of this affair) and as it unquestionably was their father *Jacob's* sincere sense of the matter, must not the same sense be much stronger in *Joseph*, a man of superior piety to them all ? and would he give himself, endowed with all the power and grandeur of *Egypt*, and what is more, with the spirit of God, in marriage to an uncircumcised family, upon terms less advantageous, than his brethren would give a sister who was defiled ? Let any man judge if this be credible !

It was certainly very natural for the *Jews* to conclude, that if their servants, bought with their money of strangers, must be circumcised, much more should they, with

* Gen. xxxiv. 14, 15, 16.

whom

whom they entered into the closest and most intimate alliance, by marriage. And as for any singularity in the practise of this rite, among the *Egyptians*, different from the practise of the *Jews*, singularities in all rites of religion, (*i. e.* departures and variations from their true original institution and manner) are common in all countries; and less to be wondered at among the *Egyptians*, than any other people; for as they affected to be thought to have learnt nothing from any other nation, that affectation would naturally urge them to vary their rights, into the greatest difference they could, from the practise of others.

To confirm this account yet farther, let it be observed, that, in fact, the priests of *Egypt* were circumcised, even as low as the time of *Josephus*; for *Josephus* refuting the calumnies of *Apion* against the *Jewish* observances, and among others, against circumcision, and abstinence from swine's flesh, has these words; * *If any one should ask him (i. e. Apion) whom he thinks the wisest and most pious of the Egyptians, he would certainly confess the priests to be so, for these two things are enjoined them by the kings from the beginning; the worship of the Gods, and the study*

* *Joseph. cont Apion. l. 2. p. 1374.*

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of wisdom; now they are all circumcised, and abstain from swine's flesh. And then he exposes the folly and blindness of *Apion*, in objecting that to the *Jews*, as a reproach, which the wisest of his own countrymen practised. If this rite had been then, or even originally, practised by all the *Egyptians*, I should think *Josephus* would as naturally have retorted the reproach upon *Apion* from the practice of the *Egyptians* in general, as *Apion* would have declined urging it.

BESIDES, I think it demonstrable both from *Jeremiah*, ix. 25, 26. and *Ezekiel*, xxxi. 18. that the *Egyptians* were not universally circumcised in their time: for tho' there is a difficulty in the construction of the 25th verse of that chapter of *Jeremiah*, yet the last words of the next verse put this point out of all dispute, *viz. For all these nations (i. e. Egypt, &c.) are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart:* From which words, 'tis evident, that the *Egyptians* were uncircumcised in the flesh: the same thing is also evident from the cited passage of *Ezekiel*; where *Pharaoh*, and all *his multitude*, are considered as uncircumcised: and unless these assertions were notoriously true, 'tis incredible how these prophets could deliver them to a people, who could not but know that they were notoriously false.

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THE great prejudice that blinds and byasses the minds of men upon this point, is, that the *Egyptians* were a great and flourishing people when the *Greeks* first speak of the subsistence of this rite amongst them, and the *Jews* nothing like so considerable; and therefore they think it highly improbable, that the proud *Egyptians* should derive this practice from the (comparatively) poor *Jews*: but there is a gross delusion that runs thro' all this reasoning; the *Egyptians* were a very great people in the time of *Herodotus*, but it was impossible they could be a very great people in the time of *Abraham*, i. e. when circumcision had its origine; there could be no such thing as a great empire in that early age of the world, nor till long after; and that this rite obtained early amongst them, should seem probable, inasmuch as they vaunted it to have obtained always.

THEY also forget, that all the most authentick accounts of antiquity, suppose the *Egyptians* instructed by *Abraham*, not *Abraham* by them; derive all their learning and wisdom from *Abraham*: and, at the same time, shew him not only to have contemned their religious rites, but even to have convinced themselves of their absurdity; as shall be seen hereafter.

LASTLY, they forget, that it is utterly irrational, and without the least foundation either of proof or probability, to suppose this rite of circumcision, to be of human institution.

IN one word, the only rational conclusions that can be drawn from a thorough and a candid examination of this matter are these three :

First, THAT circumcision was demonstrably of divine institution.

Secondly, THAT the *Egyptian* priests, in all probability, learned it either from *Ismael* or *Joseph*.

Thirdly, THAT the bulk of the people (if they used it) fell late into the practice.

THE reader hath here a candid and clear state of this controversy : together with the plain, obvious, (and, as I think, unanswerable) reasons, of my opinion upon this subject ; and if any man shall attempt to refute these plain reasons, for believing (as I firmly do) that circumcision was originally instituted by God, (Commanded first to *Abraham*, and from him derived by his sons and servants to other nations) and can find
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any new matter, or room for opposing me with candour and integrity upon the point, I promise his arguments the most sincere and serious consideration I am capable of; tho' it should end in a publick retraction of what I am now satisfied to be the truth.





DISSERTATION VI.

Of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

IN the 18th chapter of *Genesis*, is recorded a conversation, between *Abraham*, and that glorious Being before whom he considered himself as *dust and ashes*, concerning the destruction of *Sodom and Gomorrah*. In this conversation, *Abraham* is represented interceding for that abandoned people, with such strength of reason, and so clear a sense of divine justice, with such fortitude in defence of innocence, and yet such infinite deference to the great Judge before whom he pleaded; with such a mixture of humility and humanity, of wisdom and of virtue, so right a temperament of spirit; as renders his character the most amiable and exalted, that can well be imagined among mankind.

IN

IN discoursing upon this subject, I shall enquire,

First, WHAT ends of divine wisdom were answered by recording this whole relation, and conveying it down to future ages. And,

Secondly, I SHALL enquire, what evidence there is, that the cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were destroyed in the manner here related by *Moses*.

AND doubtless one end of infinite wisdom in recording this relation, was, to shew *Abraham's* character, in such a light, as might leave every man of common sense, a competent judge of the amiableness and excellence of it.

FOR, since it seemed good to Almighty God to distinguish *Abraham* with singular and eminent marks of his favour, and since God foresaw at the same time, that the influence of vain men would charge this conduct with partiality * ; nothing could better become

* On account of his having, as they imagine, no distinguished merit or title to the divine favours above other men.

The instances of this kind, are from such trifling writers, as I am almost ashamed to quote: the main objection to him, is,
his

become his wisdom, than to convey such an account of *Abraham* to future ages, as should demonstrate to every candid and considering man, that a great variety of excellent endowments, every virtue that can adorn, or exalt the human nature, were centered in him ! and of consequence, rendered him the fittest object of the divine favour, that can be imagined.

THE precedent accounts of him, sufficiently shew, his piety, his prudence, and moderation ; and now comes on another relation, which sets forth his hospitality, his temperance, his humanity, his humility, his

his want of veracity in calling his wife his sister, in a strange country; most absurdly making him accountable for all the accidental consequences of such a conduct: and this is to me a strong argument of the high opinion these men must have (at heart) of *Abraham's* character, when such an imputation as this is so urged and aggravated against him. He is, I believe, the first, and only mortal, that ever was charged with immorality, for disguising his true character in a strange country; which was no way injured by the disguise, nor had any right to the knowledge of more truth concerning him; especially, when there was not so much as a verbal falsehood in the assertion; she being, in truth, his sister, according to the idiom of language in those early ages; tho' not incestuously, at once his wife and his sister (*i. e.* the immediate daughter of the same father or mother, in which case only he could be guilty of incest) as some have asserted, from the force either of uncommon ignorance, or effrontery ! And I must own, that writers on the side of revelation, have, I think, taken more pains to confute such cavillers than they deserve. A circumstance more justly exceptionable in this great man's character, shall, with God's assistance, be candidly considered in its proper place.

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fortitude ; and all these set off, with such light of reason, such integrity of heart, such simplicity of manners, and such beauty and skill of address, as enabled him to expostulate with his Maker, not only with a decency, but also with a dignity not to be described.

HAD *Moses* only given this character of *Abraham*, in the abstract, besides that it had been cold and unaffecting, there had been then nothing in it, sufficiently distinguished from what pride and partiality have since ascribed to other men, or, if there had, would not the same vanity, which now objects, and upbraids, think it self then entitled to doubt, or disbelieve ? To ask, how all this appears ? And why *Moses* did not relate the facts upon which he founded his opinion, and leave his readers to pronounce upon them ? and to infer as they found reason ?

Now this is what *Moses* actually hath done ; conveying *Abraham's* character, to us, in the simplicity, of such short and natural relations, in a plain account of such apt address, and so generous a behaviour, as cannot fail to affect every heart, not yet hardened by inhumanity, or made insensible by insolence, at the same time placing it in a light, so amiable, and so exalted, as hath
never

never yet been reached by all the pomp of eloquence, and all the paint of flattery.

AND here I must observe, that if *Moses* is not admitted to be a writer inspired by God, yet he must be allowed, upon many accounts, the greatest genius this world ever saw ! even the historical parts of his writings, never yet were, nor ever will be equalled.

PERHAPS there is not a more effectual way of convincing candid men, and confuting cavillers, upon the point before us, than by shewing the several parts of this patriarch's conduct in the relation before us, in their true light ; which will make his perfections sufficiently shine out to every common eye.

ABRAHAM, in a hot country, and in the heat of the day, sitting in the shade of his tent, protected by the spreading oaks of *Mamre*, (long after from him famed with posterity *) sees three men at some distance ; travellers, as he probably deemed them, weary with toil, and faint with heat : Immediately, without a moment's hesitation, regardless of the refreshment he himself en-

* *Abraham's* oaks at *Mamre* were celebrated in the fourth century.

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joyed in the shade, he hastens to relieve the distress of strangers, who needed the aid of his humanity : for the text tells us, that when he saw them, *he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant ; let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.* Here is an united decency, and sincerity of address, sufficient to shame all the forms of courts, in their utmost refinement and elegance ; every delight he desires to do his guests, he requests of them ; and with an earnestness, that demonstrates that he himself had yet more delight in doing it.

NOR is he content with the supply of such cheap pleasures, as rest, and shade, and water, howsoever grateful and refreshing in a sultry day and in a scorching clime ! but immediately adds, in the fulness of his hospitable spirit, *And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts ; after that you shall pass on ; for therefore are ye come to your servant.* Nothing is more remarkable than the refinement of this address ; he diminishes, as much as possible, the merit of every office he means to do them : If they are to be refreshed with water, he calls it *a little water* ; and, if with food, he calls it *a morsel*

morsel of bread: He says not one word of the best of the entertainment he intended, to prevent the trouble of apologies from them, and the disquiet which he imagined might arise to them, from the apprehension of all the trouble he was to take, upon their account; but, at the same time, (without waiting to be refused) he immediately hastened into the tent to *Sarah*, and (however such an office might be vexatious in the heat of the day) he instantly urges her; *Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth*: this said, *he ran to the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to a young man, and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter and milk and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.* In this account, besides the character of *Abraham's* humanity, hospitality, and address, is contained, a fine picture of his temperance, and that rural simplicity of food, in which he rejoiced; here is no variety, either of costly wines, or of costly messes; no expensive luxury; no temptation to intemperance of any kind; tho' from the veneration he had for his guests, it seems highly probable, that he rather exceeded, on this occasion. His veneration for them strongly appears, in this single circumstance, that, while they ate, he stood by, to attend them. And here, by the way,

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we may observe the awful sense *Abraham* had of the dignity of his guests ; one of them especially, whom, at his first salutation, he styles his *lord*. This patriarch, who was now a great prince, as princes were then in the world : and had, before this, vanquished kings : yet, upon the first sight of these his guests, he bowed himself towards the ground to the most eminent amongst them ; and, while they sat at meat, he thought it not below his dignity, to wait upon them.

THUS far, I think, his humility, and hospitality, and temperance, the sweetness of his manners, and the refinement of his address, abundantly shew themselves. Nor do the other parts of his character shine out with less lustre, in the subsequent account of him ; for, no sooner did the Great Being here spoken of, declare his resolution, of examining into the crying corruptions of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, but *Abraham*, concluding, from the wickedness of the people, what they deserved, and, from the importance of the messengers, that they could be sent on no common errand, yet, concluding, at the same time, from the knowledge he had of *Lot*, and from the impulse of his own virtue, which taught him to think the best of others, that there must be some righteous men amongst them ; falls instantly into so anxious a solicitude, for the few good men he imagin'd to
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be there, as urged him to a most earnest intercession for their safety ; and not only so, but for mercy to both the cities, for their sakes. His intercession is inimitable ! and no words but his own, can shew it in half its beauty, and excellence.

AND Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous, within the city : Wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner ! To slay the righteous with the wicked ! and that the righteous should be as the wicked ! that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

WITH how noble a fortitude in defence of innocence, and how right a sense of the divine justice and mercy, is this intercession urged ? And yet, at the same time, with what humility ? With what strong impressions of the dignity of his Judge, and the infinite deference due to him ? He knew that justice was a claim of right which God allowed to all his creatures, and therefore he urged it, with all the fortitude, and ingenuity, allowable in a reasonable creature, and a free agent ; but, at the same time, he knew the superiority of his Maker, and the submission due to him, and therefore he did
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it with all the distance and deference that became a dependant being ; and, we find, he was accepted accordingly ; *And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom, fifty righteous, within the city, then I will spare all the place, for their sakes.*

THEN *Abraham* (with the same fortitude and force of reason, but with added beauty and humility of address) *answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes ; peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous, wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five ?* This plea also is admitted ; and the Lord *said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.*

By this time, *Abraham* had gain'd new courage, from the graciousness with which his plea was accepted ; and the vehemence of his zeal carries him one step farther, without any apology : *And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there.* This also is admitted ; and he *said, I will not do it for forty's sake.*

THEN *Abraham*, again, moved by the workings of an upright spirit, and a compassionate heart, and yet, at the same time, under strong distress, from an apprehension, that the spreading guilt of *Sodom* had not left

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even that small number of righteous men, within its walls, again, urges his intercession, in such emphatick expressions of humility and concern, as are not to be described. *Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there.* This also is graciously complied with; and the Lord said, *I will not do it, if I find thirty there.*

AGAIN, *Abraham*, still supported by the goodness of his cause, and the graciousness of his judge, and still rising in his request, *Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it, for twenty's sake.* And here the patriarch, dreading the danger of an unbecoming importunity, but more dreading to give up the cause of innocence, sums up all in the most becoming earnestness and humility of one concluding request. *Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once; peradventure ten shall be found there.* And the Great Being, whom he petitioned, still patient, and still complying, still answers, with infinite condescension, *I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*

TAKE then the character of *Abraham*, as it is clearly collected from this short account of his conduct, added to that of his piety, fortitude,

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fortitude, and resignation, in other instances, more particularly in relation to the command of sacrificing his son ; And I appeal to the best understandings, whether it is possible to conceive a more compleat character among mankind.

ANOTHER reason why it seemed good to infinite wisdom to record this conversation with *Abraham*, was, to establish, by so familiar and beautiful a narration, the important doctrine of God's immediate inspection into the affairs and concerns of mankind ; of his not contenting himself with governing the world by what men call his general providence, and the established order of nature ; but interposing in a most exact and particular manner, to punish iniquity, and to rescue and reward righteousness, over the face of the whole earth : at the same time, to let all succeeding generations see, God's gracious methods of mercy with mankind ; to teach them, in a most familiar, delightful way, in a way at once obvious and agreeable to every capacity, that, when God visits the earth in vengeance, he does not involve the innocent in the punishment of the guilty ; that ten righteous men are enough to save a devoted city from destruction ; nay more, a devoted country ; and that vengeance is suspended even for the sake of one : as appears from those words of the angel to *Lot* ; *Haste thee, escape thither,*

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for I cannot do any thing, 'till thou be come thither. Sodom could not be destroyed 'till Lot was safe in another city ; and that Lot was the only righteous man in that city, seems sufficiently plain, from the words of that wicked people to him : (ch. xix. v. 9.) *And they said, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge : This one fellow ;* from hence it appears, that there was but *this one*, who took upon him to controul them in their wickedness ; and, besides this, we find, in the preceding part of this chapter, that the people of Sodom were unanimous, in the horrid attempt they made upon the angels, at Lot's house ; the text says, *All the people, from every quarter, compassed the house :* Possibly, indeed, Lot's sons-in-law, might not have been there, out of veneration to him ; but yet it appears, from the sequel of the relation, that they had as little religion as the rest ; for, when Lot went to warn them of the ruin impending over that abandoned people, we find, that they no more believed one word of what we told them, than if they had been modern free-thinkers ; for the text says, *he seemed unto them as one that mocked ;* and so they also were involved in the common ruin. This circumstance, however, must make some distinction to their advantage : for our unbelievers, instead of suspecting that he mocked, would have been sure to mock him, at all adventures : and the more, perhaps, because

because it was impossible to prove him in the wrong ; nay, tho' the serious attention of a few hours might prove him demonstrably in the right ; and tho' they could have no security from being carried, by their contempt, quick to perdition, the next moment.

HAD the same truths which are here so delightfully conveyed into the mind of every reader, been only laid down in a dry dissertation, how few would either read or regard them ! How long would it be before men of the best capacities could perfectly understand such reasonings ! and how few among the common herd would ever be capable of comprehending them ! or would ever attend to them, if they were ! whereas, being now conveyed in an historical relation, at once so plain, and so delightful, so fitted to engage and to fix the attention, every child is eager and able to understand them ; and I am persuaded, that scarce one child, who ever once heard, or read this history, ever forgot it. And, by this means, the fear of God, his detestation of sin, and his mercy to righteousness, are insensibly conveyed into the mind, and the nations of the earth are blessed in *Abraham*.

THE serious reader will reflect how obvious it is, to infer, upon this occasion, the great wisdom of early instructing, and enuring
P 3 children

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children to read the scriptures ; especially those historical parts of them, which render the examples of piety and virtue, so very amiable ; and the examples of vice and irreligion so detestable : that, whilst they are delighting their hearts with the most pleasing, the most engaging histories, that ever were penned, they are, at the same time, filling them, with the love of every virtue, and the abhorrence of every vice ; they are, at the same time, enlarging, and ennobling their souls.

AND here I cannot, without equal wonder and delight, reflect upon the infinite wisdom of God, in the conduct of this one revelation concerning *Abraham*.

VAIN men are wondring at the familiarity of this dialogue, with that patriarch, and cavilling, that a neighbouring city could not be destroyed, without acquainting him with it. Whereas, if they gave but common attention to all the circumstances of adorable wisdom, that shine out thro' this whole conduct, and would allow themselves to consider the reason assigned by God himself, for acquainting him with his purpose ; and would reflect but one moment how well his infinite wisdom and goodness are justified in the event, they could not but fall down into the lowest confusion, for their own folly ;
and

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and the deepest veneration of his adorable providence! *And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: for I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham, that which he hath spoken of him; i. e. that it may be verified which God declared of him, that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed.* And then follows God's communication of his purpose, and the conversation in relation to *Sodom*.

HERE we may see, that one reason of God's imparting to *Abraham*, his purpose in relation to *Sodom*, was, because he knew his piety would be propagated, thro' his children, and servants, over the face of the earth; and with it, would this history be conveyed; which, as I before observed to you, was so admirably fitted to impress the fear of God upon all that should read or hear it; and that, not only in the easiest, but also in the most effectual way imaginable! and as there is scarce one region under heaven, where this history has not already reached, 'tis evident, to a demonstration, that the world hath from that day to this, been

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bettered and benefitted by *Abraham*; and doubtless will continue to be so, as long as this history continues to be read: nay, I doubt not, will continue till this prophecy of him is fully compleated! till *all the nations of the earth*, are also in this instance, and by means of this very relation, *blessed in him*.

THE infidel reader, if any such should chance to vouchsafe this work a contemptuous perusal, even for cavil or confutation, will, I hope, forgive me, if I admonish him in the words of the apostle, *Acts* xiii. 40, 41. *Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* Our despisers are yet more infatuated, than those to whom St. Paul applies this prophetick denunciation; for these believe not, tho' they see this word, and work, daily and incontestably verified, before their eyes.

ANOTHER end proposed and attained by God's antecedent communication of his design to destroy *Sodom*, to so good, so wise, and so celebrated a man as *Abraham*, was, that the fact of God's immediate interposition and determined destruction of those cities,
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on account of their crying guilt, should be supported by the clearest, and the amplest attestation; should come ascertained and recommended to all mankind, by the best known, the best esteemed, the most authentic, and most unexceptionable testimony the whole world could afford.

THE fame of *Abraham*, his great virtue and wisdom, and peculiar favour with Almighty God, were now thoroughly known over all the most celebrated and best inhabited regions of the earth*: and we may be sure

* It will not, perhaps, be amiss briefly to collect the testimonies of heathen historians upon this point, viz. how far *Abraham* was now known in the world: nay, more, how far he became a blessing to mankind, even in his lifetime.

Nicholaus Damascenus (as he is quoted by *Josephus*) says, that *Abraham* was famous throughout the whole region of *Damascus*, where he dwelt; that, urged by a famine, and a desire of conversing with the *Egyptian* priests, he departed thence into *Egypt*: where he soon became famous both for wisdom and virtue: for whereas the *Egyptians* were divided into many religious sects, each applauding his own, and decrying every other; *Abraham* convinced each of them apart of the folly of their opinions, and taught them arithmetick and astrology.

Eusebius also (*Evang. præp. l. 9. c. 17.*) quotes *Alexander Polyhistor*, who quotes *Eupolemus* verbatim, to this purpose; That *Abraham* was born at *Ouris*, a city of *Babylon*; that he excelled in wisdom and astrology, and was in eminent favour with God for his piety: that he came into *Phœnicia* by divine command, where he taught astronomy; and was in high favour with the king of the country. Then adds, that the *Phœnicians* were invaded by the king of *Armenia*, and *Abraham's*

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sure his great piety, the signal favour of God to him, his merits and abilities of every kind, were not less known than honoured in his own family. His whole household were witnesses of his having entertained three extraordinary persons on the very day before this destruction, with an humble and a submissive observance, and attendance, which could be due from *Abraham*, to no earthly being! (and one of these with a very distinguished deference!) and probably so great a prince as *Abraham* did not wait upon these glorious guests

ham's nephew carried away captive; and that *Abraham* redeemed him by arming his servants, and conquering the conqueror: that he received gifts from *Melchisedec*, the priest of God: after this, was forced into *Egypt*, by a famine, (with the story of his wife at large) where he taught them astrology, &c.

Artapanus also, quoted by *Eusebius* (*ibid.* c. 18.) from *Polyhistor*, mentions his going first into *Phœnicia*, his teaching them astrology, and going thence into *Egypt*.

Melo also is quoted by *Polyhistor*, as witnessing the fame of *Abraham's* great wisdom, &c. But what proves *Abraham's* fame, as the author of true religion, to have been thoroughly established, and in the highest esteem all over the east, is *Zoroastres's* undertaking, more than 500 years before the coming of *Christ*, to restore, and to establish the religion of *Abraham* all over *Media*, *Persia*, *Parthia*, *Bactria*, &c. as *Mahomet* did about 600 years after *Christ*, in *Arabia*; every one knows, that the veneration in which *Mahomet* found this patriarch's name, was the main foundation upon which he built his hopes of succeeding with the *Arabians*: and the nature of the thing, (added to the testimonies of antiquity upon this head) speaks the reasons of *Zoroastres's* conduct to have been the same. From whence it appears, that *Abraham* hath, from the earliest ages, been in the highest veneration all over the east, as he unquestionably is at this day.

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alone : and therefore it is reasonable to believe, that some of his household might be present, and witnesses to the promise made to him of a son by *Sarah* ; a woman, barren from the beginning, and now superannuate ! at once out of the course, and above the power of nature. And probably the impressions of veneration which these glorious guests made upon *Abraham*, were not less forcible upon his family ! it was very natural to apprehend, that the coming of such very extraordinary persons, must be for some very extraordinary purpose.

EVERY circumstance of this affair, naturally tended to excite their attention to a more strict observance and enquiry, after all that passed on that great occasion : and if the natural consequence of that attention and observance, was an antecedent notice of God's design to destroy those great guilty cities ; such a knowledge must certainly be of vast consequence, to establish in their hearts, a right, and a strong sense of God's inspecting the affairs of mankind, and interposing to reward and punish, as also to perpetuate the memory of that interposition to all posterity : whereas, otherwise this great event might, in time, be ascribed to meer natural causes : And, for any thing that appears to the contrary, the conversation in
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relation to *Sodom*, might have passed in the tent as well as that which related to *Sarah*.

BUT though it had not, and though none of *Abraham's* household should be supposed to have attended their master, when he conducted his great guests towards *Sodom*, yet nothing was more natural, than an impatient curiosity in *Sarah*, and his whole house, to learn their business thither : and as nothing could be more natural to true piety, than a willing, nay, an eager gratification of that curiosity, there is no doubt but that *Abraham* readily embraced this occasion, (the noblest that ever offered from the foundation of the world !) to inform them in the ways of God's justice and judgments ! and to prepare them to see the sudden, and the dreadful destruction of those devoted cities for their enormous guilt ! by that means, to stamp the fear of God deep upon their hearts.

H E R E then are in effect many hundreds of witnesses of this purpose of Providence, before the execution of it : which, with all the circumstances of the event, must attest the immediate interposition of Almighty God in the government of the world : and convey it with irresistible evidence, over the face of the whole earth.

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ANOTHER end of infinite wisdom in recording this history of *Abraham*, and the destruction of *Sodom*, was to give us a true idea of that guilt, which drew down the divine vengeance, upon this devoted people, and to convey this knowledge to us, in a way worthy of infinite wisdom and goodness !

HERE was a habit of guilt, the most monstrous and unnatural that can be imagined ! a crime not to be named among men ! and much less to be explained or described ; and yet there was a necessity that it should be known, that it should be seen in all its aggravation, in all its horror, in order to vindicate the justice of God, in so dreadful a chastisement of it ! and that this chastisement should be a terror to all succeeding generations ; to guard them against a sin so shameful, and so detestable.

NOW all this, is clearly and compleatly effected, in the simplicity of a plain natural account of God's sending two angels, to execute the purposes of his justice, upon that abandoned people ; and the violence that abandoned people unanimously agreed to offer to those blessed beings in human form. The text says, *The men of Sodom compassed the house round, both old and young, all*
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the people from every quarter. Now this combination, in so detestable a purpose, shews them all depraved, beyond imagination.

WHEN the youth of any place, have lost all reverence of the aged, and fear not, to expose their guilt to their eyes, from whom, of all others, they should hide it; it is a sure sign that corruption has made great progress among them; that people are hastening to destruction. But when the aged, have lost all reverence for themselves! when (as the prophet *Isaiah* expresses it) *they declare their guilt like Sodom, they hide it not*; when they fear not to publish their shame to their sons; then is guilt in its last gradation! that people is utterly abandoned! that people is ripe for perdition! (Can the inhabitants of *Great Britain* read this reflection, without trembling for themselves, and for their children!) And that this was the condition of that devoted city, when God destroyed it, is sufficiently clear from *Moses's* account of that destruction; in which every common eye sees the heinousness of the guilt, and the justice of the punishment, without the least offensive mention of the crime that deserved it. The guilt is exposed in all its horror, and the reader is eager for divine vengeance upon it; and yet the purest ear

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is not offended with any one word in the whole relation.

So has infinite wisdom conducted it, and so evident is it, that this also *cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel*. If this is not the dictate of divine wisdom, what is ! Equal it if ye can, ye proud preferers of prophane history, and boasters of abilities merely human. If *Moses* was uninspired, why is he superior to all the glories of *Greece* and *Italy* ? And if he is superior, why is he yet reviled ? Why is he not preferred ? And why is not that superiority traced up to its true source, the *fountain of wisdom* ?

AND here I cannot but observe, upon the wide difference, in point of true virtue, between that religion which guides you to salvation, and that infidelity which would seduce you to destruction ; that where-ever the influence of true religion reaches, there vertue lives and prospers. That where-ever infidelity prevails, all kinds of immorality attend it, and this detested practice among the rest, too notorious in this infidel age ! That whilst the preachers of the word of God, are shewing you the horror of the vice before us, and the dreadful vengeance due to it, the patrons of irreligion are, as far as they can, acquitting it of moral turpi-

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turpitude *. or, publishing panegyrics in its praise; and, to the utmost of their power, propagating them to posterity †. O Lord, *righteous and just*, how long shall this people provoke thee? Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How long shall the ungodly triumph? How long shall the wicked-doers speak so disdainfully, and make such proud boasting? They smite down thy people, O Lord, and trouble thine heritage, and yet they say, *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard. Take heed, ye unwise among the people? O ye fools, when will ye understand? he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that made the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not punish?*

AND thus having shewn you, how thoroughly the wisdom of God is justified, in revealing his will in relation to *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, to his servant *Abraham*, and recording this whole history, of the destruction of that accursed people and place, to succeeding ages: and what gracious and great

* See the *author of the rights*, &c. p. 264. who assigns That as the only reason of the moral turpitude of that action, which some men may imagine very well consistent with it, viz. the preservation of the human species.

† *Bayle's dict.* vol. 3. under the word *vayer*. note E.

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ends are answered, by conveying it down
from generation to generation.

I SHOULD now proceed to enquire, according to the method laid down, what evidence there is from other historians, that these cities were destroyed in the manner here related by *Moses*. But as this is a point as well attested, as the nature of the thing will allow, and by writers of all denominations, and of undoubted credit, and some of them not only strangers, but enemies to the revelation established by it; I shall not take up the reader's time in recounting many testimonies upon this point at large. And therefore hope he will be content with the few following extracts.

FOR as there are no very antient histories of the early ages of the world extant, besides that of *Moses*, we can reasonably expect no account of this matter, except from such of the *Greek* and *Latin* historians, whose subjects led them to treat of this country.

DIODORUS SICULUS, who flourished about the time of *Julius Cæsar*, describes the lake *Asphaltites*, (which now fills that space where these cities stood) at large, (l. 19. p. 734. edit. *Hanov.*) and tells us, that the adjacent region was then on fire; and sent out a grievous smell, which he assigns as the
VOL. II. Q cause

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cause of the sickly and short lives of the neighbouring inhabitants.

STRABO, who flourished soon after, mentions the sea of *Sodom* by the name of the *Lacus Serbonis* (l. 16.) speaks of it as on fire in his time ; and adds, that the broken and burnt rocks, ruins of buildings, * and cineritious earth seen all about it, &c. — gives credit to the testimony of the people of the country, who say, that thirteen cities, (of which *Sodom* was chief) which antiently stood here, were destroyed by earthquakes, fire, &c. some entirely swallowed up, and others deserted by such as could fly from them.

TACITUS, in the fifth book of his history, describes the lake nearly in the same manner with the writers before mentioned ; and then adds, that near it are those fields, now barren, reported to have been

* Mr. Maundrel tells us, in his journey from *Aleppo* to *Jerusalem*, (p. 85.) that it was confidently affirmed to him by the father guardian, and procurator of *Jerusalem*, both men in years, and seemingly, not destitute either of sense or probity, that they, with several others, had once actually seen one of those ruins, the waters being then very shallow: and if it be true, as *Tacitus* and *Justin* affirm, that this lake is never ruffled with wind ; (which, I presume, may be, in some measure, owing to the weight of its water, as well as the bitumen) the *Asphaltus*, with which it abounds, will sufficiently account for the duration of these ruins.

REVELATION *Examined*, &c. 227

formerly fruitful, and inhabited by great cities, which were destroyed by thunder; and that the traces of the fire were still visible in the burnt earth,

As it is needless to search for other testimonies on this head, I shall only add, that this fire lasted till after the age of the apostles; and was burning in *Philo Judæus's* time; which clearly explains a passage in the epistle of St. *Jude*, where he says of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, that *they are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*: now a fire which was actually burning when he wrote, and had continued to burn for more than 2000 years together, sufficiently justifies the apostle in calling it eternal; or, as the word may otherwise be rendered, enduring from generation to generation.

My next observation is this: that the pillar of salt into which *Lot's* wife was turned, subsisted in the time of that author who wrote the *Wisdom of Solomon*, as we may read in the 10th chapter of that book, at the 7th verse, and that *Josephus*, (who himself saw it) and later writers attest the same thing of their times*.

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* *Benjamin the Jew*, who lived in the 12th century, speaks of it in his *Itinerary*, p. 77, with as much negligence and unconcern, as if it were a point past all doubt. But adds a

I AM sensible that this is a point upon which learned men are much divided: but thus much, I think, is highly credible upon the whole, that *Moses's* account of this matter is true (not figuratively, as some understand it, but) according to the very letter of the text; that *Lot's* wife became a real statue, and that this statue lasted many ages; lasted, at least, till a new revelation from heaven, the revelation of *Jesus Christ*, made this monument less necessary. And as to the difficulty of salt's continuing undissolved in the open air so long, it is well known to naturalists, that rocks of salt are as lasting as any other rocks, nay more so; and that houses are built of them.

Now there is reason to believe, from the 29th chapter of *Deuteronomy* at the 23d verse,

circumstance which, I believe, will hurt his credit with every candid reader: *it is diminished* (says he) *by the licking of cattle; but increases again to its old dimensions.* (An idle story which he took upon trust from the dreams of some rabbins) And a circumstance yet more incredible than this was reported of it in *Tertullian's* time, viz. that it did *muliebria pati*; but yet I must beg leave to say, that such monstrous reports concerning it, are not perhaps very ill proofs of its existence at that time. That it exists not now, I am inclined to believe, inasmuch as *Brochard* and *Radziwillins* are said to have enquired after it to no purpose; and yet, I own, I cannot but wish that Mr. *Maunder's* curiosity had carried him to examine with his wonted exactness, what his guides told him, that some remains of that monument were still extant.

that

that much salt, as well as sulphur, fell down from heaven upon this devoted region, when *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* were destroyed: nor perhaps is the great saltness of the sea of *Sodom*, beyond that of any other sea in the known world, without the least change from the perpetual influx of fresh water, (of water remarkably sweet, as *Diodorus Siculus* observes) into it, an ill presumptive proof of this: at least it must be allowed a circumstance of weight, to corroborate any other evidence upon this head. And as thunder stiffens all animals it strikes, in one instant, and leaves them dead in the same posture, in which it found them alive: there is no sort of difficulty in conceiving, how this unhappy woman's body, being prepared by heat, and penetrated and incruited with salt, might long subsist as a statue of salt, in the very posture in which this judgment from heaven found her. Nor are we without examples of such changes in other writers and historians of undoubted credit.

I SHALL mention but one. *Aventinus*, an historian of great ability and integrity, in the seventh book of his *Boian Annals* (edit. *Basil*, p. 633.) tells us, from the credit of *Conrad*, an eminent physician and mathematician, who was himself, with the chancellor of *Austria*, an eye-witness of the event, that, at the time of a great earthquake, which

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happened *A. D.* 1348. fifty cow-keepers and their cattle were turned into statues of salt, in a village of *Bavaria*.

GIVE me leave to add, that this change of *Lot's* wife was not occasioned barely by her looking back, but by her loitering unseasonably behind her husband; for it is clear enough from the 19th chapter of *Genesis*, at the 22d verse, that this vengeance from heaven did not begin till *Lot* was safe in *Zoar*: consequently his wife could not have been affected by it, had she not both looked back, and stayed unseasonably in the plain, contrary to the express command given by the angel; as you may read in the 7th verse of that chapter.

AND as this unseasonable delay of *Lot's* wife, was without question occasioned by her solicitude for her children which she left behind her, the story of *Niobe*, weeping for her children, and being stiffened into stone with grief, is doubtless founded upon this history.

POSSIBLY too, the fable of *Orpheus's* being permitted to redeem his wife from hell, and losing her afterwards, by looking unseasonably back, contrary to the express command given him, and then, thro' grief, deserting the society of mankind, and dwelling in desarts,

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farts, might be derived from some obscure tradition of this history. *Sodom* was now the liveliest emblem of hell that can be imagined: it was granted to *Lot*, by a peculiar privilege, to deliver his wife thence: he was expressly commanded (*Gen. xix. 17.*) *Look not behind thee*; his wife was lost; after which he quits the city, and dwells in a cave on the mountains. Here are all the main circumstances of the fable, and the poets had nothing to do, but to vary and embellish as they liked best.

BUT however that may be deemed of, there are very clear and strong traces of the destruction of *Sodom*, in the fable of *Baucis* and *Philemon*.

Jupiter and *Mercury* descend to the earth in human shape; they are excluded from a thousand unhospitable houses, and one only admits, and entertains them, with an uncommon spirit of hospitality; refreshing them after their fatigue, with a warm bath, and feasting them with all the variety of food, fruits, and liquors, their poverty could afford. After which the Gods reveal themselves; declare that the impious neighbourhood is to be chastised, and they only exempted; commanding them, at the same time, to go up with them into the mountains. They did so; and as they came near the

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summit, look'd back, and saw the whole country, except their own house, drowned in a lake. Is not this in substance the history of *Sodom*?

Two angels come to *Sodom* in human shape; *Lot* accosts, and invites them to his house, in the most kind and courteous manner; begs them to turn in, to stay all night, and to wash their feet; and when, with much intreaty, he had prevailed upon them to do so; the text tells us in one word, (what *Ovid* describes at large, with a poetick luxuriance,) that *he made them a feast*: (How inhospitable his neighbours were, is sufficiently seen, in their vile attempt upon these strangers.) The next morning, these angels reveal their purpose of destroying this abandoned race; conduct *Lot*, and his family, out of the city; and command them to fly to the mountains. They did so; and the whole region, they escaped from, was drowned in a lake.

So well hath infinite wisdom provided, that the sacred truths of divine revelation, shall not only be supported by the attestation of enemies, but likewise preserved even in the vanity and extravagance of fables. Even *they*, O Lord, *shew the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power: that thy power, thy glory, and the mightiness of thy kingdom might be known unto men!*

DIS-



DISSERTATION VII.

*Of the Command given to Abraham, to
sacrifice his Son.*



HIS command is thus introduced in Gen. xxii. 1. *And it came to pass, after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am.*

2. *And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee unto the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*

By the introductory words, *after these things*, the Jews understand, after all the precedent temptations, with which it pleased God to try the faith of *Abraham*; counting up nine tryals antecedent to this; but, I think,

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think, we are well warranted to understand these words more at large; to signify, that this command was subsequent to the several other intercourses of the Divine Being with *Abraham*; to the several deliverances wrought for him, the promises made to him, and blessings bestowed; subsequent to the institution of circumcision, and the solemn covenant ratified by it; subsequent to the expulsion of *Ishmael*, forced upon him in the height of paternal fondness; and when he had now no stay of hope, or consolation of age, but *Isaac*; and, even subsequent to the repeated promises he had, from God himself, of being blessed, enlarged and multiplied in this very son: After all this, to be commanded to destroy him, and destroy him with his own hands, was surely the severest tryal to which human nature could be exposed.

As faith is the great *Christian* duty, upon which all others are built, and is at the same time the foundation of all religion, (*for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*) it is no wonder if we find this great governing principle of religion, reviled and ridiculed, above all others, by the infidel world: and, as *Abraham* is, in the scriptures, stiled *the father of the faithful*, and is indeed the great pattern of firm trust and confidence

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fidence in the promises of God, however improbable, or apparently impossible, to be fulfilled; and, at the same time, the great example of ready obedience to the commands of God, how strange and unaccountable forever to human wisdom: it is no wonder to find his character also, treated, upon all occasions, with all imaginable obloquy, by those, who make their own unguided reason, the sole rule of their duty; and their own misguided insolence, the measure of that submission due to God, from his creatures: and, as God's command of offering up *Isaac*, is the most extraordinary instance of duty, that ever was exacted, and *Abraham's* immediate compliance, the most extraordinary instance of obedience, that ever was paid; it is no wonder, if both these are, in a singular manner, the constant objects of infidel contempt and calumny.

BUT, at the same time, to satisfy all good *Christians*, and candid enquirers, that there is no other foundation for all this outcry of unbelievers, than what is laid, in the depths of their own conceit, and corruption; I shall, with God's assistance, shew, in the following dissertations.

I. THAT this command of sacrificing *Isaac* as it is laid down in the scripture, is no way incon-

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inconsistent with the justice or the goodness of God.

2. THAT *Abraham's* obedience was such, as became a wise and a good man to yield to the commands of his Maker. And,

3. THAT all the objections raised against both, are the effects of gross ignorance, and narrow thinking.

IN the first place then, if this command were directly designed for the destruction of *Isaac*, there were demonstrably no kind of injustice, either in the injunction, or execution of it, since God, the author and giver of life, can, without the least pretence of injustice, take it away, when, and in what manner he pleases: did *Abraham* receive the powers of his body and mind, upon the terms of disobedience to his Maker, in the use of them, whenever obedience was offensive or disagreeable to him? Or, did God confer life upon *Isaac*, upon the terms of taking it away only in one certain manner? Or, did he give it, as all others, under the ordinary reserve of his own indisputable and indispensable right of resumption, in any manner he thought fit; and, if he did, how was it either *Isaac's*, or his father's concern, by what hands the loan was taken back? There is then evidently no colour of injustice in the case, even on supposition

sition that the command were really designed for the son's execution, by the hands of his father.

AND yet a late celebrated writer, hath the assurance, to pronounce calmly and peremptorily, that, *if Abraham had obeyed, the action had been abominable in the eyes of God and man.* Now, if this position be true, it must be so, because no case can be conceived, in which God could exact obedience to such a command, consistently with infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness; and I must own, that, if I could not conceive such a case, yet I should not take upon me to pronounce my conceptions adequate measures of the attributes of God. But, when I can conceive a thousand cases, wherein this may be done, consistently with every perfection of the divine nature; nay, in direct consequence of them all; as in punishment of concealed guilt, or prevention of foreseen evil, in a thousand instances, I must own, I could not but consider myself as the most arrogant, the most presumptuous, the most blasphemous of all wretched mortals, should I once dare to deem that action abominable, supposing that God once commanded it; not because a command, as such, alters the nature of actions, but because a divine command necessarily implies wisdom, and justice, and goodness, tho' the reason of that command should
not

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not appear to such a wretched, short-sighted, limited reptile, as I am.

D O E S not reason antecedently demonstrate that God cannot be unjust or unmerciful, and yet does not experience shew us, that he daily takes away the lives of innocent creatures? and does he not do this from the very motive of mercy, in a thousand instances? is it not in prevention of guilt and misery, that *the righteous are taken away from the evil to come?*

T H E R E is indeed something shocking at first sight, in the idea of a parent's taking away the life of an innocent child; but then the express command of God, entirely alters the case. The reason, why such an action, is shocking, is because it carries with it the idea of injury and grievous cruelty; and nothing is more abhorrent from nature, than the cruelty of parents to their offspring; as being contrary to that strong instinct which makes the happiness and well-being of their children, their nearest and tenderest concern; but where the action is once commanded by God, all these reasons cease.

A G O O D man is antecedently satisfied, that God can command nothing but for wise, and good reasons; and that all his determinations must be for the best; and consequently,

quently, that it must be his son's interest, and advantage, to be disposed of as he directs: and that, in truth, the cruelty would be, not to dispose of him in that manner; because that were, as far as in him lay, to with-hold him from that condition, which infinite wisdom and goodness had appointed for him, *i. e.* to rob him of his best state.

Abraham therefore, being a wise and a good man, could not but know this; and therefore as soon as God commanded, he readily obeyed; not only from a sense of the duty he owed his Maker, but likewise from a full conviction that his disobedience would be injurious to his son; would, in truth, be the greatest cruelty he could do him. This is demonstrably the true state of the case, even on supposition that God's command were absolute, and *Abraham* and his son perfectly innocent, *i. e.* on supposition that they both were, what no mere mortal men ever yet were, or will be: And if, on the other hand, we suppose them criminals, who will pretend to tell us, why God might not ordain such an execution, for their mutual punishment? Are there not numberless instances of men, un-noticed for eminent iniquity, reduced by the divine justice, to the necessity of destroying their own children in calamitous circumstances of various kinds; And will any man of common sense say, that such visitations are in-

con-

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consistent with infinite goodness? Is not terror one of the noblest instruments of mercy? To keep the world happy, by keeping them virtuous? And to keep them virtuous, by keeping them in awe? And how are beings of a mixed nature, under the divided influence of passion and reason, more effectually awed, than by the exemplary punishment of offences? And tho' that punishment should apparently exceed the guilt it chastized, in any particular instance, is it ours to pronounce upon appearances? Are we adequate judges in cases of this kind? Is it ours to search the secrets of the heart? To determine demerit, and to proportion punishment? And if it be not, what means this wild unruly insolence, of disclaiming and reviling every part of divine revelation, which does not immediately fall in with every little narrow conceited conception that comes into our heads?

SUPPOSE, *Moses* had represented *Abraham* and his son, in appearance innocent, and yet both reduced to this sad necessity: the one, of inflicting, and the other of suffering a calamitous death by the hand of his parent, what would right reason infer from such an example? What indeed, but one, or other, of these conclusions: First, that if they were really innocent, God inflicted this evil on them in prevention of a greater;

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greater; (and we know that in this case the lesser evil has the *ratio* of good) or for some great and good purpose above our comprehension: but whatever the reasons of this conduct might be, that God would infallibly reward this extraordinary instance of duty and obedience, in some extraordinary manner: agreeable to his own infinite wisdom and goodness! Or, 2dly, that notwithstanding their apparent innocence, they might, in truth, be criminals; for that God seeth not as man seeth: that *as the wisdom of men is foolishness with God*, so is their sharpest sight, blindness: and that *secret things belong only to God*: that this was an example of humiliation, to sink the merit of seeming righteousness, and to restrain the rashness of judging and pronouncing upon appearances! And what could such an example mislead, but conceit and arrogance? What could it mislead, even in that obscurity, but that very vanity, which it can now neither conduct, nor inform, with all that evidence and light of wisdom, that surrounds it? Since nothing can be clearer from the scriptures, than that this is an example, not of the punishment of guilt, but of the trial and triumph of duty; for *Moses* tells us expressly, on this occasion, that *God tempted Abraham*; it is true, the expression of *tempting* is sometimes taken in the sense of seducing to sin; but in this sense we are

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assured, *that as God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*; by *tempting* then, in this place, is plainly meant, the putting of his duty to the trial; and so the *Arabic* version renders it, *he proved him, he searched him out*: the original word is indifferent to either sense*; and that it must be understood here in the latter sense, is evident not only from the nature of God, but also from God's own words in *Gen. xxii. 12.* *For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.* Now I know, says God; or rather, as it is in the original, *Now I have known*, not that God did not know this as fully before, but that he now knew it by experience; he had now proved it; he had now brought his obedience to the test; that *Abraham* had now given such evidence of submission, and resignation to the divine will, as must put his piety out of all doubt, and that the manifestation of this pious disposition, was the sole purpose of this command. And will any man of common sense say, that God cannot, both in justice, in

* And so we see is the *Latin* word by which it is rendered, *Deus tentavit Abrahamum*: the word is indifferent either to temptation, or trial. In the latter sense are to be understood those words of the poet:

*Cuncta prius tentanda sed immedicabile vulnus,
Ense recidendum est ne pars sincera trahatur.*

And so in several parts of the scripture.

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wisdom, and in mercy, bring true religion to the test ? to the test of severe, and repeated trials ? the better to display, to accomplish and to crown it.

GREAT virtue has a right to be conspicuous, it is sinking the merit of heroism, to withhold the occasions of exerting it, to deny it combat, in the cause of virtue, is to deny it glory ! and therefore the justice of God, is so far from being concerned, in guarding great minds from great trials, that it is clearly interested in granting them ; and certainly no man will say, that the goodness of God, in putting virtue and piety to the proof, is to be estimated, only by the little transient, temporary anxiety of the trial : and not rather by that lasting joy, and excess of transport, that awaits, and rewards the conquest. Temporary anxieties, are the seasonings that recommend and endear virtue, as fasting recommends food : exemptions from evil are some of the greatest felicities our nature knows ; but when they are succeeded by real good, our happiness has all the heightening it is capable of : and hence it is, that great blessings would lose half their relish, if they were not seasoned, and sweetened by relief from distress ; it is opposition that heightens, and exhibits things in their true proportion and price. If there were no such thing as sickness in the world, health

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would lose half its value. Take away darkness, and light will lose half its glory.

HAD *Joseph* made himself known to his brethren, at first sight, the joy of the discovery, had lost all its heightening; but when it broke upon them from the depth of distress, the rapture was unspeakable! we may judge of the transports of their hearts on this occasion, by what we feel in our own, upon barely reading the relation (a relation which the whole compass of human literature hath never yet pretended to equal). And was not the memory of that distress, or rather the strong sense of happiness in being delivered from it, a sure fund of joy for the rest of their lives? What then did *Joseph* in delaying that happiness, but contrive to exalt and perpetuate it? And do we imagine that *Abraham's* joy was less lasting, or less exalted than theirs? Was the recovery of a brother, lost by guilt, equal to the recovery of a son, devoted to duty? Of a twelfth brother, to an only son? Of a brother, envied, and hated, to a son inexpressibly beloved? Is the memory of the distress they were delivered from, to be once mentioned with his? The happiest reflections upon the divine goodness, in the diversion and disappointment of guilt, are they to be named, with the conscious delights of duty! of the highest
and

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and most heroick duty, that was ever yet heard of among men ! of duty, so immediately, and so amply rewarded ! of duty, that instant crowned with applause from the mouth of God. When, as *Moses* assures us, *the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham, out of heaven, the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

WAS ever obedience so crowned? Is there a joy in heaven beyond the transport of such an applause? What is it then these groveling objectors cavil at? Is it that faith was so immensely rewarded? Do they reproach the goodness of God with blessing beyond imagination? With crowning a trial of three days anxiety, with lasting, and unspeakable felicity? With the highest happiness human nature is capable of enjoying upon earth, or, perhaps, even in heaven?

ADD to all this, that God had yet other blessings in view from this trial, those end-

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less blessings derived upon mankind, from the excellence of such an example ! Is not every instance of duty and submission to the will of God, under a great variety of temptations, and as great a variety of subsequent triumphs, at once the noblest support, and incitement to virtue ! And is not every such example a new light set up on high, to warn us of danger, and to guide us to duty ? And is not one of the greatest, as the sun in heaven, to cheer, to lighten, and to direct ?

AND therefore, since God's command to *Abraham*, is evidently calculated for these great, and gracious, and glorious ends, the putting his faithful servant to so severe a trial, is so far from being any way inconsistent with his justice and goodness, that it is, in truth, an ample and godlike manifestation of both.

I PROCEED therefore in the second place, to shew you, that *Abraham's* obedience, on this occasion, was such, as became a wise and a good man to yield to the commands of his Maker.

A WISE and a good man must know, that obedience to his Maker, is the great governing duty of his life ; and the greater the obedience, the more glorious the discharge

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charge of duty : so wise and so good a man as *Abraham*, must be antecedently satisfied, that a being of infinite wisdom and goodness, could give no command, that must finally terminate in calamity upon innocence and obedience. What then had he to fear ? What had he to do, but to obey, and leave the rest to infinite wisdom and goodness ? And was this an irrational submission ? Or a confidence ill grounded ? He knew this son was given him in an extraordinary manner ; and why might he not be taken away in a manner as extraordinary ? And when he was taken away, he very well knew, that God could again restore him, in a manner yet more extraordinary ! and that raising him from the grave, had no more difficulty with infinite power, than raising him from the womb of a woman barren at first, and now, by the course of nature, long past the power of conception ! And therefore *St. Paul's* reflection in the 11th chapter to the *Hebrews*, is a noble comment upon the principles of *Abraham's* obedience on this occasion. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead : from whence also he received him in a figure.*

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HE could not but recollect, in how solemn a manner, God, had before this, promised to establish his covenant with *Isaac*, and with his seed after him : and he could not but know, that God was faithful and just to fulfil his promise ; and as for the time, and manner, in which this was to be done, both those, he well knew, were the concern of infinite wisdom, and goodness, and veracity ; which could not fail to effect both, in the best manner, and in the fittest season. What then had he to fear, or to despond upon ? I would not lessen the merit of so firm and so illustrious a faith ; without such a support, humanity must sink under so great a trial ; and the same infinite goodness, which tempted his faithful servant, in so extraordinary a manner, would *not suffer him to be tempted, above what he was able to bear.* And yet possibly, it might be made a question, whether he, or his son, had more merit in this conflict of faith.

ISAAC, was now, indisputably, of years, to enable him to defeat his father's purpose, had he not voluntarily and most surprizingly submitted to it : The most learned and moderate computations, suppose him now at man's estate ; and the load of wood which he carried to consume the burnt-offering,

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offering, demonstrates him, of age and strength enough, to frustrate the weak efforts of an aged parent *, had he not with infinite resignation given up his hands to be bound : and suffered himself to be *led as a lamb to the slaughter*. And if all this does not constitute him an amazing type of *the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*, what is there amazing in this world ! Why, is there one such instance, of so meek, so deliberate, so determined a submission to death, in obedience to the will of his father, and his God ? And why is there but that one, in all the annals of the world, from the foundation of it, to this day ?

AND thus having shewn you that *Abraham's* obedience, in this case, was such, as became a wife, and a good man to yield to the commands of his God ; I come now in the last place to answer the objections with which infidels have assaulted this part of *Abraham's* character.

* That *Abraham* was now alone and unaided in binding his son, appears indisputably from the text : for we are told at first, that he *took two of his young men with him* ; and then follows, ch. xxii. 5. *And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you.* And when the affair was over, *Moses* tells us, (*ibid.* 19.) *So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up, &c.*

IN the first place then, it is said, that the Lord of the universe governs himself by the eternal rules of reason, and cannot act himself, nor command his creatures to act, in any instance contrary to them ; consequently no command, in contradiction to any of these rules, can come from God : now the command to *Abraham* of slaying his only son, is (they say) such a command ; as being in contradiction to that eternal rule of reason, by which parents are obliged to preserve their offspring : consequently, such a command could not come from God.

IN answer to this, I own that God must govern himself and his creatures by the eternal rules of reason, and can give no command in contradiction to them.

BUT then common sense tells us, that these are the rules not of human reason, but divine : these rules, must result from the relation which the whole, and all the parts, have to one another : which nothing but infinite wisdom can comprehend : and therefore to affirm, as one of our free-thinking writers does, that *true religion is founded upon moral fitness*, is to speak with due dignity of divine institutions : but to infer from hence (as that author does) that *man by his own natural ability (considered as man)*

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man) is qualified to discover true religion: is to infer I know not what, besides the extent of human arrogance: to affirm that man is in all cases an adequate judge of moral fitness, is to affirm him unbounded in his knowledge; fully endowed with a thorough comprehension, and clear view of all the relations of things throughout the universe; from whence only that moral fitness can arise: an assertion so utterly absurd and ungrounded, that the weakness of it, can only be exceeded by the vanity.

IF it were pretended, that even in every little earthly state, every subject was, and ought to be, an adequate judge of all the prudential and political measures of his rulers, is there a man of common sense, that would not explode so senseless and presumptuous a maxim, with disdain! Are we incompetent judges of the conduct of our earthly rulers, in a thousand cases, and are we adequate judges of the wisdom and justice of that God that governs the world, in every case? O shameless and insupportable vanity!

IN the next place, we readily own, that all parents are eternally obliged, as far as in them lies, to preserve their children.

BUT

BUT then surely it will by no means follow from hence, that parents have a right to disobey the commands of God : or that they are obliged to preserve their children in contradiction to the commands of God, because obedience to the commands of God, is a prior obligation, and the duty of preserving their children is but a secondary subsequent obligation ; and must give place to every obligation that is prior ; consequently, whenever it is inconsistent with any prior obligation, it ceases ; and not only so, but the direct contrary becomes a duty.

BUT here it may be objected, that the preservation of children is a law of nature, binding upon all parents, and being a law of nature, must be owned a law of God : and that to suppose a command given by God, in opposition to this law, is to suppose that God can contradict his own laws.

I ANSWER, That to suppose God unpossessed of a power to suspend, or controul, his own laws, is to suppose him unpossessed of a right essential to all legislative authority : — to suppose him incapable of working a miracle, (for all miracles are controulments of the laws of nature) or interposing, in any extraordinary manner in the government of the world. The ordinary laws

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laws of God, are the ordinary means for attaining the ordinary ends of his providence, and therefore the extraordinary ends of his providence, demand an extraordinary controulment of these laws; and to suppose such a controulment any way inconsistent with immutability, or infinite wisdom, is to suppose an extreme absurdity; unless it be supposed, that the immutability of God, supposes an immutable state of things, that is, a fatal necessity, which is direct atheism; otherwise the steady and invariable wisdom of God, requires a change of measures, upon a change of circumstances.

BESIDES, would it not be strange, to suppose these laws uncontrollable by any extraordinary interposition of providence, when we behold them daily controuled by one another, in the ordinary course of things. For example,

THO' it be an eternal law of nature, and consequently, of God, that parents should preserve their children, yet if that preservation be inconsistent with their own, that eternal law is controuled, and their obligation to it, ceases that moment; because self-preservation is a prior obligation. For this reason, if a parent has no more food than will subsist himself, he may let his child
starve:

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starve : if he be swimming to shore upon a plank, which would only support one, and his son should seize it, he may drown his son to save his own life.

It is a known rule, that a parent can violate no duty he owes to his neighbour, to preserve the life of his child, much less can he violate any duty he owes to the community on that account, and least of all any duty he owes to God ; if a parent be a magistrate, and the child a criminal deserving death by the laws of his country, Is the parent in this case obliged to preserve him ? Quite the contrary ! he is obliged to destroy him : nay, suppose a man condemned innocent, the magistrate, whose duty it is to put the laws in execution, is bound in conscience to put him to death, tho' he were his son ; and the reason is obvious, the extraordinary duty he owes to his country, is prior to the ordinary duty he owes his child ; and consequently, whenever they become inconsistent, his duty to the child must give way.

Now every one that knows any thing of the duties of morality, knows, that they subsist in this order ; the first duties we owe, or can owe, is obedience to the will of God however known. And obedience to the will of God, seen in the ordinary establishment

blishment of things, must give way to the will of God extraordinarily revealed. The second order of duties, are those we owe to the community : and the third, are those we owe to ourselves, the duties then which men owe to their children, are only in the fourth rank. Whenever the duties men owe their children become inconsistent with the duties they owe themselves, their duties to their children instantly cease ; whenever they become inconsistent with the duties they owe their country, they cease for a higher reason ; and whenever they become inconsistent with the duties they owe to God, they cease for the highest reason. All private duties give place to the duties men owe to their country ; and the duties they owe to their country, give place to the duties they owe to God : because those are the first and highest obligations we can lie under. And it is for want of knowing these common and plain distinctions, that infidels have run riot in folly, whenever they talk of the inconsistency of any of the divine commands, related in scripture, with the eternal laws of reason ; For,

Is it not an eternal law of reason, antecedent to every social obligation in life, either private or publick, that God the Creator has an inherent, incontestable right, to employ the
the

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the powers and faculties of all his creatures to the purposes of his eternal will? And is not the first obligation we owe in life, an obligation of immediate obedience to all the commands of God, in consequence of his inherent right to employ the powers and faculties of his creatures in subservience to the purposes of his will?

Is there a clearer dictate of reason, than that God has an absolute right over the lives of all his creatures? Will any man of common sense say, that God, who gave unconditional life and being to his creatures, hath not an absolute right to take them away, when, and by what means he thinks fit? And will any man of common sense say, that he can abuse that right? That there is a possibility of his employing that right, erroneously, or to evil purposes? And if there is not, can there be a doubt about the duty of our submission, whenever he thinks fit to exert it? Are not these eternal antecedent laws of reason? Is there then any inconsistency either in his commanding, or our obeying in conformity to them? In conformity to the eternal laws of reason! What senseless suggestions are these? And what unparalleled effrontery at once to revile the revelation of God, and the common sense of mankind with such monstrous and blasphemous absurdities?

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THE sum of all is this ;

GOD has an undoubted right over the lives of all his creatures. He cannot exert that right erroneously.

HE has an undoubted right to employ the powers of all his creatures, to the execution of all his rightful commands: all the commands of God must of necessity be wise, righteous, and just: what God can rightfully do, he can rightfully command to be done*.

IT is the indispensable duty of all intelligent beings, to obey God in all things that he can rightfully command to be done. These propositions are all self-evident.

IF then God has a right to take away the life of any human creature, he has a right to command the powers of any intelligent being, in the execution of that right; no

* Tho' it is not always true, that what man can rightfully do, he can rightfully command to be done by another; yet is it eternally true of God: human rights in many instances, cannot be transferred; inasmuch as they are personal and imperfect, and cannot devolve upon another by his command in whom that personal and imperfect right is vested; because he may have no right of command or rule over that other; and because a third person may be injured by such devolutions: But the divine rights are all perfect; God hath a right of command over all beings, and no third person can be injured by exerting it, because the divine right is prior.

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being can have a right to disobey, what God has a right to command : if therefore God commanded *Abraham* to take away the life of his son, he had a right to be obeyed in that command : consequently *Abraham* had no right to disobey him ; and if he had no right to disobey, obedience was his indispensable duty.

THIS is such a chain of clear, irresistible reasoning, as, I believe, infidels will hardly attempt to break thro' ; or if they do attempt it, I will be bound to promise them, that they will find their weakness in the attempt.

BUT their absurdity will appear yet farther in the other objections they have raised against Revelation on this head. Which, by God's assistance, shall be discussed in the next dissertation.





DISSERTATION VIII.

A short recapitulation of the precedent dissertation.



IN the precedent dissertation, I laid down these two propositions.

I THAT the command of sacrificing *Isaac*, as it is laid down in the scriptures, is no way inconsistent with the justice, or goodness of God. And,

2. THAT *Abraham's* obedience was such, as became a wise and a good man to yield, to the commands of his Maker.

UNDER the first head, I shewed you, that, if the command had been absolutely intended to take away *Isaac's* life ; and *Isaac* had been perfectly innocent, there could be no colour of injustice in the case ; since God, the author and giver of life, hath an undoubted right, to resume it, when, and by what

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means he thinks fit ; and, since his infinite wisdom and goodness sufficiently secure us from all suspicion of his taking it away arbitrarily or unlawfully ; nor is there any imputation or suspicion of cruelty upon the conduct of God, in such cases, since the scriptures assure us, that *the righteous are taken away from the evil to come* ; since experience shews us, that innocent creatures are daily cut off from the earth ; and reason antecedently demonstrates, that this, as all other parts of the divine conduct, must be the effect of infinite wisdom and goodness, however obscure and unaccountable, to such short-sighted creatures as we are.

It is owned, indeed, that such an action in a parent, would be shocking at first sight, as carrying the idea of a grievous injury, and unnatural cruelty ; but the command of God, entirely alters the case ; because reason antecedently demonstrates, that all his dispositions and determinations must be for the best ; consequently, the only cruelty and injury to the child, would be, to withhold him from that state, which God had decreed for him.

ON the other hand, I shewed you, that, if *Abraham* and his son were criminals, God might, in strict justice, ordain such an execution, for their mutual punishment. But that

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that in truth, this was only a command of probation, and never intended for any other purpose than to render *Abraham's* piety more illustrious, and to entitle it to higher rewards.

UNDER the second head, I shewed you, that *Abraham's* ready obedience was the effect of his wisdom and piety.

HE knew, obedience to the divine will, was the first duty in life; and that obedience to the will of God, seen in the ordinary establishment of things, must give place to the will of God revealed in an extraordinary manner; and that no command from God, could be erroneous or unrighteous, or terminate in the calamity and misery of innocence. He knew, that God had given him gracious promises, in relation to this very son; and he had a firm confidence in the justice and veracity of God; that he was faithful and just to fulfil his promises.

IN the last place, I answered that formidable objection of infidelity, *That God cannot act himself, nor command his creatures to act, in contradiction to the eternal rules of reason*; by shewing you, that God commanded nothing in *Abraham's* case, but what he had an undoubted right to command; consequently, that this command was perfectly conformable to the eternal rules of reason;

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and that the obligation of obedience to his rightful commands, is prior to all others; consequently, whenever that obligation comes in competition with any duty men owe their children, their duty to their children ceases.

I NOW proceed to consider some other objections, raised by infidels, against this part of divine revelation.

IN the next place then, it is urged, (with a view of imputation upon this command to *Abraham*) that *a religion commanding parents to destroy their children, cannot come from God.*

IN answer to this, it is owned, that a religion which made this the ordinary duty of parents, could not come from God, because such a duty would necessarily destroy all human society, and, of consequence, all religion with it; but what religion does this objection affect? I am sure, neither the *Jewish*, nor *Christian*: Was any such religion ever heard of, besides those of the heathen world, to which infidelity is labouring to bring us back, and the worst examples of which it hath lately outdone?

BUT, though, this cannot be the ordinary duty of parents, from any true religion, does it follow from hence, that God could not,
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in any case whatsoever, rightfully give such a command, or exact obedience to it? Are we adequate judges of the whole compass and extent of infinite wisdom? Does it certainly follow, that God could not, on any particular occasion, or for any end of divine wisdom whatsoever, give such a command? Does it follow, that he could not impose such a command, upon a wicked parent, in chastisement of guilt? or on a righteous parent, in proof of obedience, or to render, his faith and piety more illustrious? And will it follow from hence, that an history relating, that such a trial was made by Almighty God, in order to that very end, is false or fallacious? Let us see how this reasoning will hold. The argument, in its full force, will stand thus.

A RELIGION commanding parents to destroy their children, cannot come from God; therefore that history which tells us, that God in trial of *Abraham's* obedience commanded him to sacrifice his son, cannot be true. How wild and inclusive is this reasoning? How will it hold in other cases? For Example,

A TREATISE of medicine, which should prescribe physick for the daily food of patients, could never be the work of a wise and a good physician; because it must destroy

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the very end for which physick was ordained; therefore any history that should tell us, that physick was prescribed by a wise and a good physician, in any particular case, must be false. Is there a man of common sense that does not see the silliness of this way of arguing? We see then, that the inference from this command, to the disadvantage of revelation, is altogether inclusive, and absurd. Let us now consider, what inference can be made to *Abraham's* disadvantage, in the intended execution of that command, from the general duty of parents to their children, compared with other extraordinary cases: for example, It may be said, with great truth, that he must needs be a bad parent, who commands his children to be barbarously butchered with rods and axes, before his own eyes. This position is undoubtedly true in the general; but, does it follow from hence, that the first *Brutus* was either a bad man, or a bad parent, for commanding his sons to be served in this manner, when the duty he owed his country required it? And did *Abraham* owe less duty to God than *Brutus* owed his country?

AGAIN, a captain, who should command his valiant and victorious son to be put to death, for exerting his prowess upon the enemies of his country, must surely be a monster amongst men. This position, laid
down

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down without any limitation, is undoubtedly true ; but will it follow from hence, that *Manlius* was a monster, tho' he put his own son to death, for killing *Geminus*, general of the *Latins*, contrary to the discipline of war ? And had *Manlius* better authority for putting his son to death, than *Abraham* ? Is the discipline of war a stronger obligation, than an express, positive, unerring command, from the great ruler of the world ? the sovereign arbiter of life and death ?

AGAIN, it is no uncommon case, to see parents and children engaged in the opposite interests, and listed under the opposite banners, of princes at enmity with one another. And, if the contest comes to the decision of a battle, is it not, in that case, the parent's duty to destroy the son ? and the son's to destroy the parent ? Will any man of common sense say it is not ?

IF putting a son to death, were an action, simply, and, in itself, sinful, it is evident, that no authority could justify it ; and then, neither could a magistrate honestly do this, in obedience to the laws, nor a captain, in support of martial discipline, nor a soldier, in obedience to his prince ; but surely no man was ever so extravagant, as to imagine such an action immoral, in any of those cases. What is it then that can make it immoral,
but

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but doing it without sufficient authority? Whereas killing a son in obedience to a competent authority, has evidently no more immorality in it, than killing a mortal enemy. And is not the authority of God a competent authority? Is it the duty of a parent, to slay a son, tho' innocent and unoffending, in obedience to the commands of a magistrate, his captain, or his prince: and is it no duty, to do this in obedience to the commands of his Maker? Will any man pretend to any degree of common sense, that will dare to support such absurdities? Is not then this objection to *Abraham*, and to divine revelation upon that account, the effect of gross ignorance? Or will the authors think we honour them, in ascribing it to another cause? Will they still have it placed to the score of *free-thinking*? It is indeed, in one sense, justly entitled to that appellation; inasmuch as it is thinking under a thorough, an entire exemption from all the rules of reason, and all the restraints of truth.

AGAIN, it is asked, how *Abraham* could know, that it was God that gave him this command? Should he not rather suspect the delusion of some evil spirit delighting in cruelty?

WHAT

WHAT specious trifling is here? And why should *Abraham* suspect, that God Almighty should suffer an evil spirit to delude him, acting in the honesty and integrity of his heart? Could *Abraham* suspect it consistent with the divine wisdom and goodness, to suffer a good man, acting upon the highest principle of obedience to God, to be at once invincibly deluded into the greatest, and most irretrievable calamity, and the most shocking act of obedience to the devil? Is there any man of common sense, that does not see this to be utterly inconsistent with every attribute in the divine nature?

BESIDES this, *Abraham* could not but know, that God had given him that son miraculously; that he had promised him seed by that son; that he had promised to establish his covenant with that son: Could he, after this, suspect that God would suffer all his own gracious purposes, and promises, to be defeated by the devil? Why surely these creatures imagine *Abraham* not only as infidel, but as ignorant as themselves! How else could such absurdities come into their heads?

BUT

BUT still, how could *Abraham* certainly know that it was God, that gave him this command?

Is not this, in other words, to ask, How God could make himself certainly known? To ask, how God, who gives all other beings those powers, and marks, and characters by which they know one another, could exhibit to *Abraham*, any certain marks and characters, whereby to know himself? The meanest man in this city has it in his power to make himself certainly known to the emperor of *China* or *Japan*: Do we ask then, how could God do that, which is in the power of any ordinary human creature? What astonishing insolence is it, to question at this wild rate?

HOWEVER, to comply for once with their utmost stretch of extravagance, let us examine calmly, what reasonable grounds of assurance *Abraham* could have, that this command came from God.

IN the first place then, *Abraham* left his own country and kindred, by the express command of God, and went into a strange land, which God had promised to give to his seed. It is not indeed told us, in what manner God appeared to *Abraham*,
when

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when he gave him this command ; but we may be assured from *Abraham's* prudence, that he would not lightly obey a command of so much trouble and inconvenience to him : for his greatest enemies allow him sufficiently cautious, in every thing relating to his own well-being : he was now well advanced in years, and was neither of a temper, or age, that would lightly incline him to seek adventures ; consequently, there is no reason to suspect he would obey this order, if it were in any degree doubtful to him, whether it was God that gave it ; nor would an aged parent indulge and accompany him in his obedience, as *Terah* did, unless he also had been sufficiently certified, that it came from God.

AGAIN, after he had been for some time fettled in *Haran*, long enough to have his family and fortune increase in it,* and probably, long enough to like it, and be contented with it : God commands him thence, into a strange country, in all appearance not better than his own ; and consequently, such as he cannot be presumed to have preferred

* This appears from these words, (*Gen. xii. 5.*) *And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, &c.*

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to it, for any other reason than that mentioned by *Moses*.

AGAIN, when he came into *Canaan*, God appeared to him a second time, and renewed his first promise.

AFTER this, when he was driven by famine into *Egypt*, God sufficiently manifested his signal protection of him, by plaguing *Pharaoh*, and his house, upon his account; and it is clearly implied in the relation of this transaction, that God revealed to *Pharaoh*, the reason of the plague wherewith he and his house were visited. If *Abraham* then could doubt the information of his own faculties, which assured him of the immediate interposition of God in his favour, could he doubt the attestation of *Pharaoh*, and his servants on that head? The attestation of strangers, who could have no interest in deluding him? Or if he could doubt them, could he doubt the attestation of those great plagues which he saw them suffer upon his account; or the attestation of those numerous blessings, which he saw daily multiplied upon himself in conformity to the divine promise?

AFTER this, when *Abraham* returned into *Canaan*, God again renewed his assurance, of giving him the promised land. And,

AFTER

AFTER this, it is said, that *the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision*: from whence, as also from other circumstances, it is reasonable to conclude, that the precedent applications of almighty God to him, were made in some other manner: and here the promise of an heir and a numerous posterity, are added to the promise of *Canaan*; and tho' the text tells us, that *Abraham believed the promises of God*, on this occasion; yet however, (probably because this assurance was given him in a vision) he beseeches the Almighty to give him some sure sign, that might put it out of all doubt, that this promise should be made good to him: And he said, *Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* In compliance with which request, a sacrifice is commanded to be prepared, and when it was prepared, God again appears to him in a vision; and the promise is again repeated: and after this repetition, the promise is supported by a miracle; and a covenant confirmed by fire from heaven, to consume the sacrifice, which God had commanded him to offer.

AND here it is remarkable, that this part of *Abraham's* conduct appears so full of caution, that a late writer upbraids him with want of faith on this occasion; and yet in truth, all that can be inferred from it, is
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no more than this, that tho' *Abraham* had firm faith in the promises of God, yet he took sufficient care to be fully satisfied, that it was God, that did promise. And if he was so cautious with regard to a promise, which related only to remote futurity, can we imagine, he was less cautious with regard to commands which were immediately to affect him? particularly that command, which was to affect him in the tenderest point, in the point of highest importance to him? Can we believe, that he took less care to be assured, that this also came from God?

AGAIN; when *Abraham* was ninety-nine years old, God appeared again to him; and that he exhibited himself in some glorious sensible appearance, is sufficiently clear from the text, which says, that *Abraham fell upon his face*, whilst God conversed with him. Here, circumcision is instituted; an hazardous, and painful rite! which *Abraham* could not practise, but from full conviction of a divine command. *Isaac* also is here promised to him, out of the course of nature.

AGAIN, the Lord appeared unto *Abraham* in the plains of *Mamre*, and this was evidently in a sensible shape; and it is clear from the text, that before his departure,
Abraham

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Abraham knew him to be God ; or, to speak more properly, *i. e.* more intelligibly, the *Messiah* in human form * ; this appears from the whole conversation about *Sodom*, more particularly that part of it, where he calls him, *judge of all the earth*.

SOON after this, God appeared to *Abimelech*, in *Abraham's* behalf, and inflicted a temporary barrenness upon his whole house, which was removed upon *Abraham's* prayer.

AGAIN, soon after this, God's promise of an heir was fulfilled by the birth of a son from a barren woman : and that too, long after the season of conception was over. Could he then doubt, that it was God who had promised a blessing, which nothing but He that could controul the order of nature, could confer ?

* Should any *free-thinker*, in the fullness of his wisdom, suppose this account of God's conference with *Abraham*, incredible and absurd : I must beg leave to tell him, that before he can reasonably conclude this, he must antecedently satisfy himself, and be able to satisfy every reasonable man, that either or both these positions are impossible and absurd.

First, that it is impossible that God should manifest himself to human eyes, under any sensible appearance. Or secondly, that it is absurd or impossible he should manifest himself under a human form. I cannot but say, I should be very glad to see the utmost efforts of *free-thinking* philosophy upon so curious a subject.

AGAIN, God commanded *Abraham* to comply with his wife's request, in casting out *the bond-woman and her son*. This was a command so seemingly cruel, and so grievous to be obeyed, that nothing but a full conviction that it came from God, could exact *Abraham's* submission to it; and God's subsequent extraordinary protection of the lad, and his mother, could not but confirm *Abraham* in the wisdom, and reasonableness of that ready obedience, he paid his Maker on that occasion.

AND after all these manifestations of himself and his providence to *Abraham*, he commands him to offer up *Isaac*; and will any man say, that *Abraham* had not by this time sufficient reason to know certainly that this command came from God? God had some way or other appeared and manifested himself to him nine times, before this command, twice in vision, twice by miracle, twice under some sensible appearance, and thrice in some manner not explained; he had given him three precedent commands, which no man in his senses could obey, without full conviction that they came from God. And he had given him full proof of his protection, in consequence of his obedience to each.

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THE weight of those grievous trials which it pleased God to lay upon him, was gradually increased ; banishment from his country and kindred, was succeeded by the pain and hazard of circumcision ; and that, by the grief of turning out a helpless son, whom he tenderly loved, into a wilderness ; exposed to want, and to wild beasts ! and now, his only remaining child, was to be slain by his own hands. His obedience had hitherto been gloriously crowned in every instance ; Could he then, with any colour of reason, doubt or despond now, after such reiterated experience of God's goodness to him ? God's miraculous interposition in his behalf was attested by two kings ; and the visible effects of divine judgments upon them, and their household : he had often before this called to him, spoke to him, sometimes conversed with him, and on one occasion, familiarly and long ; and doubtless, always in the same voice ; and is there, after this, the least ground for doubting, whether *Abraham* certainly knew, that it was God that spake to him on this occasion ? Shall we never have done with the importunate absurdity of such objectors ?

THE command which he was now to obey, could not be executed till after three days ; so that he had time enough to deli-

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berate upon the matter, and to be settled in a full conviction that it came from God.

BESIDES this, when God gave him the command, he told him the country where it was to be executed, but reserved the particular place for another revelation: *Get thee into the land of Moriah, (says God) and offer him there, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of;* and we find, that this mountain was not told him till the third day, and then it was far off: for the text says, that *on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.* Now the rabbins tell us, that this mountain was marked out to him, by the glory of God resting upon it, in a remarkable * manner; and indeed this is perfectly credible from the words of the text, which says, *that he saw it afar off;* now how could he see it, so as certainly to know it to be the place, but by some glorious manifestation of the divine presence upon it? Doubtless some manifestation, or some monition, which he was before well acquainted with: nay, in all probability, some such manifestation as fully satisfied even *Isaac* of the peculiar interposition and appointment of God on this occasion: and such as exacted so ready a submission from him. It was far off

* Nor is this conjecture ill-supported by the name of the mountain, *Moriah*, which signifies *Vision*.

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when he saw it, so that he had still time enough to deliberate, and be fully satisfied, before he reached it, that it was the very place marked out by God, as the scene whereon to display the glory of that faith, which was to be the admiration of all future ages.

TAKE this action then in all its circumstances, and I challenge all mankind, to shew any one action, undertaken since the foundation of the world, upon a surer, a clearer, a more deliberate, or more settled conviction.

BUT still it is objected, that *Abraham* obeyed in this case, without the least hesitation, or expostulation with God, in behalf of an innocent son, *tho' he could at another time be so importunate for the pardon of an inhospitable, murderous, impious, and incestuous city.*

BEFORE I enter upon *Abraham's* defence against this objection, one thing is unanswerably to be inferred from it : and that is, that a man who could intercede so earnestly, and with so right a sense of divine justice, to save strangers from destruction, would never have so silently submitted to the destruction of his own son, had he not been fully convinced that the command came from God ; had he not been fully convinced that God could with justice claim his obedience in this case : and

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that he could with a good conscience, yield it to his Maker.

AND now, in answer to this objection, from *Abraham's* silence on this occasion; I desire it may be considered, upon what principles *Abraham* could expostulate with God, as a parent, in this point, if he were minded so to do? What could he urge, but that he was his son, his only son, a son whom he tenderly loved? And that he could not, without the greatest violence to parental affection, lay hands upon him? Now all pleas of this kind, were clearly and fully anticipated, by the divine command. *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of; i. e.* Notwithstanding he is your son, your only son, and a son you have set your heart upon, yet must you sacrifice him to me. Here all pretence of expostulation is cut off, and any thing *Abraham* could have said after this, must have been equally impious and unbecoming.

BESIDES this, there is a vast disparity in the two cases; and such as abundantly justifies the difference of *Abraham's* conduct.

IN the case of *Sodom*, Almighty God is represented as deliberating, and undetermined : and there, *Abraham's* humanity, and the rectitude of his mind, were at liberty, nay, were engaged to interpose. But in the case of his own son, God appeared fixed and determined ; and there his humility, and the deference due to his God, forbade him to expostulate.

TO all this may be added, that he knew, if he erred in the first case, it was the error, of an upright, an humane, and a generous spirit ; but an error in the latter, could only be the effect of partiality, and self-interest ! and *Abraham's* heart was too honest, and too enlarged, to allow him in a conduct, that could fall under the suspicion of being swayed by such mean, interested, and selfish principles.

WHAT is it then which his enemies object to him ? What, in truth, but the wisdom, the humanity, the rectitude, the humility, the fortitude, and the generosity of his soul ? And did ever any man object to the light, the greatness, or the goodness of another's spirit, from the prevalence of those noble principles in his own ?

SUCH was *Abraham*; and such are the objections made to him.

AND this, I hope, will be deemed a sufficient confutation of that cavil, which objects to Almighty God, the partiality of taking one man and his posterity into peculiar favour, for little or no reason: When, it is evident to a demonstration, that if ever man was peculiarly marked out as a proper object of the divine favour, from the merit of every virtue, and every distinguished excellence, in human nature, *Abraham* was that man.

I COME now, in the last place, to consider the contradictory objections, that are made to *Abraham's* conduct and character.

THE common objection to him is, that he had too much faith. And yet a late writer upbraids him with having too little, because he demanded of God, whereby he should know that he should inherit the promised land; *i. e.* because he demanded a rational conviction, that this promise came from God.

It is also objected to him, that he had too much humanity, and too little: too much for strangers, and too little for his
own

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own son. Too much for strangers, that were wicked and abandoned; and too little for his own son, who was innocent and upright; nay more, his only son and heir, the hopes of his family; the son of God's promise, whom he tenderly loved.

FOR my own part, I accept the objections with great gratitude to the authors: I thank them for objections which demonstrate the justice, the generosity, the mercy, the magnanimity, the disinterestedness, of *Abraham's* soul. I thank them for objections which demonstrate his whole conduct on this occasion, to be such as none but a truly great mind was capable of, even under the influence of the fullest and the clearest conviction.

LASTLY, the merit of *Abraham's* ready obedience, is decried by some, from a supposition, that the practice of sacrificing children was frequent in his days: whilst others, on the contrary, load his example, with the odium of having introduced that hateful practice into the world.

AND here I cannot but observe, how just and judicious that maxim of the schools is, which teaches us, that contradictory positions cannot all be true, but may very easily be all false.

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false. As they demonstrably are in this case.

THE four first, as far as they relate to the point before us, I have already discussed ; and come now to consider the two latter.

AND without entering into the contentions of learned men on either side, I shall only venture to affirm, that, take the question either way, the wisdom of God in giving this command, and *Abraham's* merit in obeying it, are abundantly vindicated.

FOR, in the first place, if (as some imagine) so impious and abominable a rite obtained at this time, it is evident, that nothing could be better calculated to abolish it, than this command to *Abraham* ; which was a plain document to the whole world, that human sacrifices were not acceptable to God ; for if they could be acceptable from any man, they would certainly be most acceptable from the best man : the man in the world then most remarkably acceptable, and in favour with Almighty God. And therefore, when it should appear in the event, that this command was only in trial of obedience, and that when it came to the point of execution, *Abraham* was expressly forbidden to execute it, by a voice from heaven :
and

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and as a document to him, and to the rest of the world, that human sacrifices were not acceptable to the divinity; a brute animal was by God's own appointment, substituted in the place of his son: I say, when all this is considered, was it possible to give a clearer monition to mankind, upon this head, than God's own express prohibition of that practice, by a command from heaven; and God's own miraculous interposition of a vicarial oblation?

AND the same reasoning that demonstrates this command wise, with a view of abolishing that abominable custom, demonstrates it, equally wise, with a view of preventing it, on supposition that it had not yet obtained, when God foresaw that superstition would soon introduce it: as it is evident that superstition only (the wildest and worst of all superstitions) did introduce it: And what could be more efficacious towards repressing it, over the face of the earth, than the attestation of all *Abraham's* dispersed servants, and descendants, vouching every-where with one voice, that God himself had prohibited their master from practising it. And therefore the wisdom of God, in this conduct, is sufficiently vindicated either way. And it is evident from the fable of *Iphigenia*, in *Dictys Cretensis*, probably founded on this history, or rather upon some confused account

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count of this history, and the story of *Jephtha's* daughter, put together. (*Iphigenia* being an easy corruption of *Jephthigia**: and a ram easily changed into a deer, supposed to be substituted by the Goddess *Diana* in her stead;) that the memory of God's prohibiting a human offering, was handed down to late posterity.

As to the second point, *viz.* the merit of *Abraham's* obedience on this occasion; if the practice of sacrificing children prevailed in *Abraham's* time, it is however, allowed to have prevailed, only from the necessity of averting some great calamity, by some extraordinary atonement to appease the divinity.

BUT this was evidently not *Abraham's* case; since this sacrifice was resolved on by him, in the height of worldly affluence, and happiness of every kind! Which places the ready submission, and resignation of *Abraham*, upon a foot of merit, very superior to that which necessity extorted.

AND thus, I hope, I have sufficiently vindicated God's command, and *Abraham's* obedience, in the point before us, from the objections of ignorant and injudicious men.

* The Greek word to signify the daughter of *Jephtha*.

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IF it be yet said, that the sacrificing of children might be derived from a mistaken imitation of *Abraham's* obedience in this point ; the answer is obvious.

IN the first place, it is an assertion without the least foundation, either of proof, or probability.

IN the next place, supposing it were not, where is that example which is not capable of being mistaken ? The only question is, Whether, as it is laid down in the scripture, it is sufficiently guarded against all reasonable danger of being mistaken ? And sufficiently fitted to prevent the evil it may accidentally occasion, from the misguided imitation of ignorant, or ill-meaning men. Absolutely to guard against error and abuse, is out of the power even of infinite wisdom, leaving mankind to the free range of their folly and perverseness !

BUT supposing this example was abused by an ignorant or corrupt imitation, yet if God foresaw that the advantages of establishing it in the world, would far exceed the inconveniencies of a wild or wicked imitation, his wisdom is abundantly justified in the point. And was there ever a nobler document, more perfective of true piety, or more conducive to the happiness of human life,

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life, than that which is conveyed to us in this example of *Abraham*! which teaches us, that nothing can be so dear, or valuable, in this world, which we must not readily resign, whenever it comes in competition with our duty to God? And that this resignation will not fail to be crowned, with more abundant blessings from heaven.

A summary
view of the
whole argu-
ment.

AND thus I have endeavour'd to answer the several objections, made to this part of *Abraham's* character.

THE first objection mentioned in this dissertation was this, That a religion commanding parents to be cruel to children, could not come from God.

IN answer to this, I observed, that this objection no way affected the *Jewish* or *Christian* religion. And that though a religion which made this the ordinary duty of parents, could not come from God, yet it no way followed from hence, that God could not, on particular occasions, and for reasons of infinite wisdom, give such a command to particular persons. And to make any inference from thence, to the disadvantage of a history, relating that such a command was given, in trial of obedience, was full as absurd, as to infer, that because physick was
not

not good for food, therefore a history relating that physick was administred by a wife and a good physician on a particular occasion, must be false.

I ALSO shewed, from several instances, that it may often be the duty of parents to put their children to death : even such as were innocent and unoffending, in obedience to authorities very inferior to that of Almighty God.

IN the next place I shewed, why *Abraham* could not suspect this command to be the delusion of an evil spirit, because he knew it inconsistent with the perfections of God, to suffer such a delusion to be put upon him, acting in innocence and the integrity of his heart ; or to suffer the purposes and promises of his own infinite wisdom and goodness, to be defeated by the devil.

IN the next place, I answered that objection, how *Abraham* could know that it was God gave him this command : by shewing, that the intercourse and appearances of the divine Being, had been long familiar to him before this time ; that he had frequently before this obeyed such commands, as no man could obey without full conviction that they came from God. And that his
obe-

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obedience was always crowned with signal blessings, and interpositions of Providence, in his behalf. In a word, that he was equally confirmed in his faith, by blessings upon himself, and calamities upon those that would injure him : by the testimony of two kings, and their households ; by sense, by visions, by miracles, by various and repeated experience.

IN the next place I shewed, that *Abraham's* silent submission to this command, as it is a full proof of his conviction that it came from God, so was it the effect of his wisdom, the greatness, and the goodness of his spirit ! and consequently, that the objections made to him on that head, are, in truth, not so much objections to *Abraham*, as objections to every nobler virtue eminent in human nature.

AND, in the last place, I shewed, that whether the practice of sacrificing children was then in use, or only foreseen by Almighty God, this command to *Abraham*, was excellently adapted either to abolish, or prevent it. That it conveyed a document of infinite importance to piety, and the felicity of human life ; and that such an example was of infinitely more consequence, than the possibility of its being abused.

I SHALL

I SHALL conclude all with this one short inference, that they that follow the faith of *Abraham*, cannot reasonably expect to be much less reviled than he is; can they hope, with all their imperfections about them, to be treated with less indignity than this *friend of God*! than this eminent example of wisdom, faith, and fortitude! of every higher virtue, and more distinguished excellence, that can ennoble the human mind? If the dignity of *Abraham's* character, cannot protect him, from the insults of the *despiser's* eye, and the *scorner's* tongue, what can a sense of very inferior worth, leave others to hope for, beyond the favour of a calmer contempt, from less offensive merit! *The father of the faithful*, hath indeed a right to inflame their rage: the wisdom and virtue of his faith, is an eternal reproach upon the blindness and depravity of their unbelief! As for meaner believers, should they have the misfortune to provoke, where they meant to persuade, they have this consolation from the mouth of God himself, in *Isaiab* li. *Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.*

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FOR *the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.*



A short



*A short review of four Revelations
considered in this period.*



AND now what ground of triumph, or even of cavil, for infidelity during this period? Can one precept here recorded, upon a fair enquiry, be deemed irrational, or unedifying? One prophecy unfulfilled? One interposition of providence unimportant? One appearance of the divine Being unnecessary or untimely? Or one command unwise or unworthy of God?

Do they object to the command given to *Abraham* to sacrifice his son? it was the noblest and the most beneficent trial of faith and obedience, that ever was vouchsafed from heaven? The most exemplary, the most instructive, the most useful

in its influence, the most glorious in its reward, and happy in its end !

Do they object the readiness of *Abraham's* obedience to this command ? We thank them, they do : and in doing so, they at once evince the clearness of his conviction that it came from God ; and the fortitude, the generosity, and the magnanimity of his soul, in his ready, his deliberate, his determined submission to it ; they object his eminent acceptance with God, and preference in the divine favour : and at the same time their own objections urge the plainest proofs, and extort the fullest acknowledgement of his superiority over the rest of mankind. It is at once the highest point of earthly honour, and test of excellence ; it is *Abraham's* peculiar glory to be upbraided with virtue, to be ennobled by reproach !

Do they doubt of the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* ? It is to this day a monument of divine vengeance, before their eyes : Their friends the heathen, vouch its destruction by fire from heaven ! The cause from continued tradition, and the effects from their own observation. They vouch the continuance of that fire, and the visible and sad effects of it in the contiguous ruins, to the very time they wrote. If unbelievers
doubt

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doubt *Moses*, they will not doubt *Strabo* and *Diodorus*; they cannot doubt *Tacitus*. What would even They demand; what can they wish, for the establishment of any truth, beyond the evidence of their own eyes, and the attestation of enemies!

Do they object the precedent notice of this destruction given to *Abraham*? They do, and with great reason: it demonstrates God's immediate inspection into the affairs of men; his immediate and deliberate interposition in the chastisement of guilt, and deliverance of righteousness: and at the same time, conveys these documents, with irresistible attestation, over the whole earth; and continues them, to the confusion of infidelity, from generation to generation!

Do they object to the divine institution of circumcision? They do; and with arguments of such force, as to confute themselves! They have a right to quarrel with this institution; it demonstrates its own divine original; and at the same time, reason demonstrates all the pretended grounds of its establishment in the world, to be idle, absurd, ignorant: as learning evinces all the authorities of its heathen origine, to be late,

late, fictitious, inconsistent, false ! So weak, so idle are the reasons by which its *Ægyptian* origine are supported, that they are confuted by their own superstitions ! (See the note p. 178.) And so absurd are the opinions of the present advocates for its heathen original, that they are overthrown even by their own arguments (p. 184, 185.)

Do they object to the predictions relating to *Isbmael* ? I cannot say they do, or that they know any thing of them ; but I dare promise the reader, that they shall scorn them at first sight ; *Facilis censura Cachinni*, The censure of a loud laugh, or a disdainful smile, falls equally within the talents of the meanest, and the ambition of the mightiest among them ! But laugh as they will, a prediction so strange, so seemingly absurd, so opposite to all the principles of human policy, or foresight, and at the same time so deliberate and circumstantial, and in fact fulfilled, and given incontestably many hundreds of years (I might say thousands) before it was proved to be fulfilled : This prophecy, as it called for some learning to confirm it, will call for something more than a loud laugh to confute it.

Do they object to the confusion of *Babel*? They do; they object to a fact that proves it self at this day, incontestably to the whole earth; inasmuch as the present variety of languages in the world, is demonstrably the effects of that confusion; nor hath it ever yet been otherwise attempted to be accounted for, consistently either with truth of fact, or common sense (*p. 105, &c.*) The *Mosaic* history of this great event, every way demonstrates its own truth; and all that can properly be called antiquity, vouches with him: the tower was built, when it could only be built by the united labours of mankind; and for the only reasons mentioned by *Moses*. And the wisdom of God in defeating that design, is amply manifested from that day to this, in keeping out that universal iniquity, by this one act of his providence; which infidelity would introduce by confusing it.

UPON the whole, the infidel world will, I hope, forgive me, if upon the most candid and diligent enquiry, I have never yet been able to find their learning far surpassing their integrity: their hardiest assaults, formidable from the
force

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force of reason; their boasted abilities above the measure of other men; or their noblest views other than pernicious to mankind, and detestable to God and goodness.

The END of VOL. II.

